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# THE WORN DOORSTEP

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# THE WORN DOORSTEP

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BY

MARGARET SHERWOOD

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AUGUST 25, 1914. At last I have found the very place for our housekeeping; I have been searching for days: did you know it, dear? The quest that we began together I had to follow after you went to the front; and, through the crashes of tragic rumours that have rolled through England, I have gone on and on, not running away or trying to escape, but full of need to find the right corner, the right wall against which I could put my back and stand to face these great oncoming troubles. I have travelled by slow trains across quiet country which does not as yet know there is war; I have driven in an old-fashioned stage or post wagon, — you never told me that there were such things left in

your country, — past yellow harvest fields in calm August weather; I have even walked for miles by green hedgerows, which wear here and there a belated blossom, searching for that village of our dreams where our home should be, quiet enough for the work of the scholar, green for two lovers of the country, and grey with the touch of time. I knew that now it could be almost anywhere; that it did not matter if it were not near Oxford, and it seemed to me that I should rather have it a bit — but not too far — away from the "dreaming spires." So I went on and on, with just one thought in my mind, because I was determined to carry out our plan to the full, and because I did not dare stay still. There's a great strange pain in my head when I am quiet, as if all the mountains of the earth were pressing down on it, and I have to go somewhere, slip out from under them before they crush me quite.

Often, at a distance, I thought that I had found it; thatched roofs or red tiles, or a lovely old Norman church tower would make me sure that my search was done; but again and again I found myself mistaken, I can hardly tell you why. You know without telling, as you must know all I am writing before I make the letters, and yet it eases my mind to write. At no time did you seem very far as I searched hill country and level lands, watching haystacks and flocks of sheep, sometimes through sunny showers of English rain.

But now I have discovered our village, the very one that I dreamed in childhood, that you and I pictured together, and I know that at last I have come home. I knew it by the rooks, for I arrived late in the afternoon, and the rooks were flying homeward to the great elms by the church, — groups of them, here, there, and everywhere, black against the sunset. Such a

chattering and gossiping, as they went to bed in the treetops! Such joy of home and bedtime! I knew it by the grey church tower in its shelter of green leaves, and the ancient little stone church on the top of the gentle hill among its old, old, lichen-covered tombstones.

The village homes, in a straggling row, looked half familiar; the grassy meadow that rolls to the village edge, still more so; and the quaint old Inn, where I spent the night and where I am writing — surely some of my ancestors, centuries ago, slept at that very Inn, for I half remember it all, — low ceilings, latticed windows, stone floor, and great, smothering feather bed. Everywhere, indoors and out, I am aware of forgotten chords of sympathy. Those small boys in short trousers, trudging home on tired legs and little bare feet — "did I pass that way a long time ago?" Did some one back of me in the march of life — my ancestors

came from this East country — grow tired and rebel in a village like this and run away to America? In some way, by memory, by prophecy, all seems mine; the worn paths; the hollowed door-stones; the ruddy faces moving up and down the walled streets, and the quiet under the grass in the churchyard. And you are everywhere, interpreting, making me understand, with that insight compounded of silent humour and silent sympathy. I am too tired to do anything to-night but have my tea and bit of toast and egg, and warm my fingers at the open fire, for the evening is chill; but to-morrow I shall go searching for our house, and I know I shall find it, for I have a curious sense that this is not only the place for my home with you, but that some far, far back sense of home broods here.

The grey war-cloud drifts closer and grows darker. Namur has fallen into German hands; there are rumours — God

grant that they are not true! — that the French and the English troops are retreating. In spite of the entire confidence of the people here in their island security, there is fear in my heart for England, this England which seems so remote from cruel struggle, as if created in some moment of Nature's relenting, when she was almost ready to take back her fell purpose, — it is so full of fragrances, of soft colours of flowers, of softer green of hedgerows and meadows. There is something in you, you Englishmen of finer type, shaped by this beauty, quiet and self-contained, of hill and dale and meadow. Surely in you too I know this quietness, this coolness, the still ways of the streams.

August 26. Past the grey church, and down the hill, at the edge of the great green meadow, and a bit apart from the village, I found our house, with its wooden shutters and its white front door closed, a

quaint old brick cottage, waiting for life to come to it again. It has a brick front walk, and a brick wall stands about it, save at the back, where the stream that skirts the meadow flows at the very garden edge. Can you see it, the wistaria, the woodbine, the honeysuckle over the wee porch, the climbing, drooping, straggling vines that make the whole little house look oddly like a Skye terrier? It is all unkempt; grass grows in tufts between the bricks, and weeds in the neglected grass. The chimney needs repairing; some of the little diamond panes in the latticed windows are broken, alas! I did not venture inside the wrought-iron gate, for the encompassing veneration for property rights is strong upon me; not in the British Isles shall I be caught trespassing! Can you not imagine, as I can, how a dainty order, satisfying even your fastidious taste, could grow out of its present desolation, with a little weeding here, a little trimming

there, a nail, a bit of board, a few bricks, — surely we could find a few old weathered ones to match. There must be touches of the new, but careful preservation of all the old, of all the eloquent worn edges that tell of the coming and going of past life.

Something — anything — to keep away the thoughts I refuse to harbour. I can not, I can not even yet, think of the misery of this war. It beats in my ears, like great hard waves; it clangs and clamours, strikes, comes in imagined horrible shrill whistles and great explosions. There is nothing in me that understands war; new tracks will have to be beaten out in my brain before I can grasp any of it. It is a vast, unmeasured pain beyond my own pain.

I have got to have a place of my own in which to face them both, for a little while, a little while, where I may stand and think, — perhaps even pray.

No one was about, except a shaggy pony, grazing in the rich green meadow, with a rough lock of hair over his eyes. I find a little stone bridge across the stream and try to make his acquaintance. He lifts his head and looks at me through his forelock, seems to respond with cordiality to my overtures, whinnies, and even takes a step or two toward me as I draw near; then, when I can almost touch him, gives a queer little toss of his head, kicks up his heels, and dashes off to a rise of ground, where he stands with a triumphant air, his legs planted wide apart, seeming to say: "Such be forever the fate of those who try to catch and harness me!" Then he falls to grazing again, keeping one eye out to see whether I am coming near.

Presently came an old man with a rake, and I made some inquiries about the house, but the haymaker's dialect was as hard for me to understand as mine was

for him. I learned only that the little 'ouse belonged to the 'All; that it had been occupied by one of the functionaries at the 'All; — it will be good for you, you Englishman, to live in a little house once inhabited by an unimportant person, good for you to forget caste and class and bend a bit, if need be, at your own front door! Like yourself, young Master went with the first adventurers to the war, the old man said, and the 'All was closed. And he added, with significant gestures with his rake, what he would do to "they Germans", if he once got hold of them. I judged, by the red satisfaction in his face, that the wooden rake in a shaking old hand constituted for him a vision of "preparedness for war."

So there it stands, on the edge of a great estate that sweeps out to eastward; low-lying lines of green in the west mean forest, and that soft look of sky and cloud in the east means the sea. It is absolutely

the place for which we looked so long and will satisfy the home sense, so strong in both of us. I wonder at my good fortune in finding it, as I carried on the search alone, and I refuse to entertain the idea that I may not have it for my own. The roof droops low over the windows; there is a tall poplar by the wrought-iron gateway; the brick wall, vine-covered in places, will shut us away from all the world, belovèd. Within we shall plant our garden, and light our fire on the hearth, and live our life together, you and I, just you and I.

August 27. But can I get it? I am in a prolonged state of suspense. Nobody in the village seems to know anything, but everybody is of firm conviction that somebody higher up knows everything, and that all is well. I appealed to my landlady; she very pleasantly informed me with an air of great wisdom that it might

be I could 'ave it, it might be I couldn't; nobody could say. No, she could not tell me to whom to apply, with the 'All closed, as it was, 'm, and the Squire away. Standing — there was barely standing-place — in her own over-furnished sitting room, filled to its low ceiling with bric-a-brac, whatnots with unshapely vases, tall glass cases with artificial flowers or alabaster vases under them, porcelain figures, — one a genuine purple cow, — she seemed, as many a more imposing person on this side of the water and the other seems, a victim of property.

"An' I do 'ave difficulty, Miss, in gettin' about," she said, as her apron knocked a Dresden china shepherdess and a Spanish guitar player off an overcrowded table; "but I don't quite know what to do about it."

"A broom!" I suggested.

"Broom? Oh, it's nicely swept, and everything dusted regularly once a week,

'm," she assured me. Oh, for one German bomb!

Luncheon time, and no solution of my problem; a futile visit to the postmistress, who informed me that I should have to wait until the war was over, and Master came home to the Hall. I was meditating an inquiry at the vicarage, though that involved more audacity than I can easily summon, when my landlord came riding home on a big bony steed and had a conference with his wife in the kitchen. He, it seems, is temporarily agent for the property; he has the keys to the little red house and to my future destiny. I try hard to think what will be pleasing to so huge and so important a personage, as I walk down the village street at his side, two steps to his one. An unfortunate conjecture about the retreat of the British brings forth the emphatic statement that the British never retreat. With a train of thought of which I am, at the

time, unconscious, I tell him that I am an American; he listens indifferently. I tell him that my uncle is at the head of an important New York banking house; he at once becomes responsive and respectful. We go through the little iron gate and up the brick walk; out of a vast pocket he takes an old wrought-iron key and unlocks the white front door.

As we entered, I had a curious sense that you were inside; I never draw near a closed door without a feeling that it may open on your face. Instead, there was only the blankness and the empty odour of a house long closed, and yet it seemed hospitable, as if glad to have me come. I examined every inch of it, peered into each corner, and explored every nook and cranny. It is just as it should be, with low ceilings, old brown rafters, and brick fireplaces, — the one in the kitchen has a crane. The little dining room is panelled, the living room wainscoted; I like the dull

old oak woodwork and the solidity of everything, which seems to belong to an elder, stable order, not to this earthquakey world of to-day. The living room, facing the south, and thus the meadow and the brook, is sunny, but not over-light, with its window seats and casement windows, diamond-paned. The stairs are narrow and a bit cramped, but my landlord of the Inn gives me permission — ah, I forgot to say that he tells me I may have the house and grounds for fifty pounds a year; fifty pounds for all this and a running stream too! — permission to make a few changes which I hesitatingly suggested, and for which I shall pay, as the rent is low. There must be a bathroom — perhaps water can be piped from the stream; a partition is to be knocked down, and the stairs will then go up from the living room, not in the little box wherein they are at present enclosed. Where can I find an old stair rail and newel post

suitable for the old house? Mine host will himself attend to the roof and the chimneys; and he says that there are some discarded diamond-paned windows lying in an outhouse at the Inn, from which glass may be taken to replace those that are broken, if any one can be found to set it properly.

He was amused that I wanted them, amused by my pleasure in the old and quaint. If he had his way, large new panes of glass should go into all windows wheresoever; he would like everything shiny and varnishy. Naturally I did not confess, when he apologized for the lack of this and that, that I was glad of the inconveniences, glad of relief from the mechanical and tinkling comforts of our modern life; he would never understand! To speak of an old-fashioned American would be to him a contradiction in terms; yet in some ways we are one of the most conservative people on earth, holding cer-

tain old ways of thought most tenaciously. It is only our muscles that are modern! I am very like a Pilgrim mother in my convictions of right and wrong.

There is some deep reason why many Americans care so profoundly for old buildings, old furnishings, old habits which we find here; they typify inner characteristics which we must not forget in a young land where changes come too swiftly. There is a steadfastness about it all; these old stone houses wear a look as if they had been built for something more immutable than human life. Never as in these recent wanderings have I had this sense of England, innermost England, of that enduring beauty of spirit best expressed in Westminster and the old Gothic churches; that England of ancient faiths and old reverences. Delicate carving and soft tinted glass bear witness to the richness of inherited spiritual life and make visible the soul of a people grown fine, old, and

wise. Old shields, grey with hoary dust, still hang on the tombs of those who have fought and conquered, or have been defeated; a sense of old sacredness lingers at Oxford's heart, — and yours. There is something here which not all the sins and shortcomings and decadences of contemporary life can change; not the luxury and the selfishness of titled folk whose high glass-guarded walls shut miles of green land away from common people; not the mistakes — and they are many — of the government. Back of all this, and beyond, is a something which means keeping, as no other nation keeps, the old and sacred fire, safeguarding civilization from the over-new, the merely efficient, the unremembering.

My new abode is lowly and cozy, with a fine simplicity in the antique furniture, carved chest, and plain chairs. The fundamental things are here; you should see the walnut table in the living room, with

its deep glow of red-brown colour. There must be some new things, of course, fresh chintzes, linen, kitchen utensils, but for the most part only oil and turpentine and a pair of good red sturdy English arms are needed to remove a certain dinginess.

So I've a home of my own, though earth crashes and kingdoms fall and a comet strikes against us and puts us out. For a little I have a fortified spot wherein to defy the worst that time can do. I am a householder, on my own plot of ground, crossing and re-crossing my own threshold; and the big wrought-iron key is in my hand. There are ashes still upon the hearth, — from whose fire? New flame shall go up from the old grey ashes, — the central spark of home shall be rekindled here; and that is the whole story of human life.

How fortunate, and how unusual, in so small a house, that the hall leads all the way through from green to green! We

shall get all the breezes that blow, for the house faces the west, as all houses should face; and always and forever we shall hear the stream. There's a step there at the back, down to the garden walk, that you must remember, you who are so absent-minded.

— I keep forgetting that you are dead.

September 6. I have been away for a week, a week in which I have not dared leave one moment unoccupied. To keep my sanity, I must be busy all the time; life cannot be cut short in this way. When great forces have begun to stir within you, like the gathering of all waters far and near, you cannot safely stop them all at once; I must have, in the weeks to come, some outlet for this surging energy.

London is quiet, and awful with the self-control of great tension. The war-terror mounts, though few speak of it;

the Germans have crossed the Marne; the French government has moved to Bordeaux, and all the world seems tottering. Back in my charmed village, I wait and listen. They would not take me at the front; did you know that, the day after you left, I made an attempt to follow? No training, and physically unfit, was the verdict. I thought that I could perhaps prove to you in act that of which I could not convince you by argument in our dispute the day we walked to Godstow, — that women have the kind of courage possessed by men.

I live at the Inn during these days while my house is being put in order. A glazier has been found who can re-set the old diamond panes; carpenter and plumber are hard at work. The hideous wall-papers in the chambers have been scraped off; they were so ugly that they actually hurt. You always told me, you remember, that I minded too much the

things that make for ugliness, that my eye was too sensitive to evil-coloured and unshapely things, and that I must live more in the world of thought. The contrast between these, in their wicked purples and magentas, and the wonderful cottage itself with its dim beauty of old brick and dusky panelling, makes one wonder at the potential depravity of the heart of modern man or woman! There's a shop in London, — I was going to take you there, — where they have reproductions of quaint old papers, the kind made a hundred years ago, with little landscapes, and sheep and shepherds, and odd flower designs. I chose three of these, and they are going on at this minute; I must go to see that they piece the two bits of the shepherdess together neatly and do not leave her head and her beribboned hat dangling several inches above her embroidered bodice. It is a relief to escape from the purple cow and the hundred and

one china abominations in this sitting room.

My landlady, fingering her black alpaca dress apron, assures me as I go, that the best of news, 'm, has come from the front; that the Germans are in full retreat, and the French and the British are nearing Berlin! If only this insular confidence that for Britons there is no defeat be not too rudely broken!

Don went with me; I went to Oxford to get him during my week away. I am so glad, so very glad that you let me have him when you went to war. He potters along behind me or runs ahead, with all his questing little fox-terrier soul in his eyes, sure, like myself, that around some corner, or on some blessed rise of ground, we shall meet you. At each fresh disappointment he turns to me with that look of perfect trust in his eyes that I, some day when it seems fit, will give you back to him. Within five minutes, at his first

visit to the little red house, he had sniffed every corner, and he dropped with a deep sigh of content on the warm brick walk, knowing the place for his own.

The cloistered Oxford gardens, with their incredibly smooth grass, were unchanged, but the immemorial quiet is broken. Your Oxford is a new Oxford, awake, struggling, suffering, nursing the wounded, while the noblest of her sons follow you to the war. Thinking of all these things as I walk, I decide not to go to the house, after all; there is a sound of hammering and an air of disquiet. I cross the little stone bridge and follow the stream; this, like the pony, is a new neighbour with which I must become acquainted, and it proves more friendly than that other. There is a touch of September gold everywhere, of autumn perfectness in things, that belies wrong anywhere upon the earth. And all the old days float down the stream; something,

the way of the water with the grasses, the ripple of the water, brings back May, and my first English spring, and you.

Do you remember that my very first glimpse of you was at the Union? You were debating, very convincingly, on the subject of disarmament, and proved the possibility, the practicability, of peace among nations. I was idly interested in you; Gladys had whispered that you were one of her friends. That night, — but never again, — you were just one of a type to me, with the fine, lean, English look of race, the fine self-control of every nerve and emotion and muscle. I noticed that you were already beginning to have a touch of the scholar stoop, and that you were a shade, just a shade, too slender. It was quite a surprise, and something of a blow to me, to find you English men not, on the whole, so stalwart as the men in America. All our lives we have read of the hale and hearty John Bull, yet our

first glimpse of you makes us think that John Bull and Uncle Sam will have to change places in the caricatures if this transformation keeps on.

The hardest thing in the world for me to understand is that the great things of life may hang on mere trifles. If I had not, acting on a moment's impulse, promised to go into lodgings with Gladys in Oxford because she would go there to study Celtic, Icelandic, and Greek, I should never have known you, never have walked with you in glory through an English spring, never have picked crocuses in Iffley meadows and anemones in Bagley wood, never have known that green rippling beauty of Oxford stream and meadow and the piercing joy of life and love that came with you. And now —

The vastness of my loss I can not even grasp; my world is swept away from under my feet, and I am alone, with nothing to stand on, nothing to reach in space.

Dying myself could hardly mean such utter letting go; I am aware only of a great blankness. I have not even tried to measure my disaster, to understand. I shall have all the rest of my life to learn to understand; I come of a long-lived race.

That which comes more often than my sense of loss is the sense of my part in letting you go, making you go! You remember that August afternoon when we drifted down the river, for you even forgot to row; the trailing willow branches ruffled our hair and gently took off my hat. It was a lazy, sunshiny, misty afternoon, such a happy afternoon, except for the war-cloud beyond the peace and the exquisite grey and green calm of Oxford. You were wondering, idly enough, about war; how was it to be justified? What right had England, with her love of peaceful enlightenment, to take this swift plunge into the awful horror? And you

went, my Lord Hamlet, with that deepening look which showed a soul drawn far within, into a long philosophic discussion as to whether war is ever justifiable; no one could adjust philosophic niceties of thought better than you. Could a man of ethical conviction, without outrage to his better self, go into that barbaric hell? All the time that your intellect was balancing, weighing, and deciding "no!" old impulses were stirring, old heroic fingers were tugging from their graves, old simple-minded forebears were alive and awake, impelling you.

The green, lovely banks grew dim; the shadows lengthened across the rippling water, and sunset flushed the western sky beyond the overhanging branches, while you fought it out. When you turned and asked me squarely, what could I say? It had seemed so piteously, cruelly simple to me from the first, so simple and so great! Of course, I come of the practical Amer-

ican race. Back of me lie generations of ancestors who have had to act and act quickly without exhausting the ultimate possibilities of thought on any subject. I do not mean that they have done unjustifiable things, but that they have had to take life at the quick. When the Indian brandished his tomahawk inside the door at the baby in the cradle, some one had to shoot and shoot instantly, without stopping to ask any authority whether shooting was wrong. That actually happened in my family; it was a little great-great-great-great-great-grandmother of mine. Her Pilgrim father was quite right. Even if his mind told him that it was wrong, which I judge was not the case, there was something in him deeper down and farther back than mere intellect; he did the right thing and did it instinctively, Lord Hamlet. Of course, in reality, his intellectual problem had been settled when he loaded his gun.

## THE WORN DOORSTEP

All life is transition, and always has been. As I understand it, with one's ancestor one has to load one's gun with one hand, while reaching forward with the other to one's descendant for the pipe of peace. One has to keep collected, centered, ready to do one's utmost in any need; the luxury of the last shade of reasoning is denied us as yet: our task is not to fail at the crisis.

What could I say, when you asked me, except the cruelly hard thing which I did say? Back of me, as back of you, lie the same fighting, plucky ancestors. The same heroic impulses that stirred their dust stir mine, and yours, — alas that it has but feminine dust to stir in me! To me, as to you, there is but one answer in the world to a question like that. There had never been any real doubt in my mind as to what you would do; I think that there had never been any real doubt in your own mind. In the great moments,

life seems neither right nor wrong, but something greater; it seems inevitable.

Poor Belgium and the baby in the cradle come back to my mind together, the highly "efficient" tomahawk replaced by the highly "efficient" siege guns. But even apart from the high justice of this issue, England was in trouble, England was fighting. What was there for you to do but help? I said only the one word "go," and even now I can recall the stillness and the wash of the ripples against our boat and through the grasses. The silence of perfect beauty rested on sky and tree and water, and the river no longer seemed a little inland stream flowing softly through grassy meadows with retarding locks, but a flowing passageway to some great sea.

The days that followed I count off on my fingers as one counts a rosary; there were not many, not so many as our prayers. Such little scraps of them, mere

fragments, come to me, shining fragments which I treasure and shall always treasure like bits of priceless jewels: in all my mental store there is nothing quite so precious. I was busy every minute, trying to console your mother and your sister, who thought you ought not to go; trying to make them see. It is as if the sun were still illuminating those days, making them forever radiant. It seemed enough to live, to try, to give one's all, not knowing; it was not hard *then;* nothing could be hard in moments of exaltation like those.

They were full too of homely toil; such queer things we had to do in getting you ready, dear. Of course you were not a trained soldier; how to become a trained soldier in a week of short days is a harder problem than many a one in philosophy. When you decided that you would be a despatch bearer and join the motorcycle brigade, because thus you could go to the

front sooner, I am proud that I did not say one word of protest, though I knew that it was the most dangerous task of all. Being a despatch bearer seemed a fitting service for an intellectual leader.

How we laughed as you practised riding! Lord Hamlet on a motorcycle, with no time for thought, no time for scruple! How we searched out rough bits of road and watched you try to cross a newly-mown meadow, where late poppies, I remember, were blossoming in the stubble. Once you struck a stone and fell, and your mother amazed you by crying out. I laughed and horrified her; but I kissed its handles before you went. The motorcycle had been to me the most hateful of modern inventions, inexcusable, unmentionable. And here it became a symbol of dauntless courage and highest service; beyond the bravery necessary for a charge in battle is the bravery needed here; this evil, roaring, puffing thing might turn

into the chariot that would carry you over the borders of the sun.

That one brief hour that we found to steal away to Bagley wood lingers yet. The anemones were gone, but all about was the soft midsummer murmur, and the ripe fulness of August life. What practical things we talked about! I think that we sent you out fitted up as well as any German soldier of them all. Who, in the Kaiser's army, had a more complete or smaller sewing kit? Who had thread wound off on very diminutive bits of cardboard to save the space that spools would take, — white linen and black linen and khaki coloured, all very strong? What Teuton could challenge you on the score of buttons? It was good, it was very good, in your mother to let me help.

You thought I never wavered; when you were doubting, I was sure; when you were sure, — you never knew that I wrote you a note that last night and took back

my decision, saying that thinkers had their own separate task, and that you should stay. I burned it. . . . I would not have you back, dear, if it meant giving up that inmost you I knew in those glorified few days. You have fulfilled yourself.

September 15. Who is going to keep house for me — that is the problem? Somebody there must be to cook and clean and polish; a staff composed of one British female is what I need, for I can do many, very many things myself.

Mine host and my landlady took counsel; I let them do a great deal of thinking for me, for their minds are rusty from disuse; you can actually hear a kind of creaking when they try to make them go. They finally decided that I was to drive in a pony cart to a village off to eastward, to consult Madge and Peter Snell, man and wife, both from a different part of

the country, lately employed at the Hall as under-cook and gardener, now out of work because the Hall is closed. I readily agreed; yes, I was used to driving, and the directions — first turn at the left, then a bit of road and a turn at the right, 'm, and then a long stretch across a dike to a stone bridge and a stream and a village spire — seemed clear enough.

But when my equipage is drawn up at the Inn door, whom do I see but my wayward friend of the meadow, harnessed to an absurd little basket-cart as diminutive as he. I am delighted to see him; is the pleasure mutual? He gives me one look out of his eyes that seems to say he will be even with me yet; Don leaps to a place of honour in the cart, and we go flying down the village street with sparks flashing from the iron-shod little hoofs. Drive? Yes, I am accustomed to driving *horses,* but not Pucks, not changelings; I never, never drove a mischievous kitten fastened to a

baby carriage! And that little "trap" was a trap indeed! What breed my pony is, as mortals reckon things, I do not know; he is too big for a Shetland, too little for a horse; perhaps he is an Exmoor pony, or the product of some northern heath. We go gaily to the left, somewhat perilously near a corner at the right, and we are out racing over a long dike built across what was once a low-lying sea-meadow. Don looks up at me with vast enjoyment in his eyes, and that little quiver of the face that means a fox-terrier smile.

About half-way across we come to a gate; there is nothing to do but for me to get out to open it, and this I do. Swift as a flash, my Puck whirls about and goes dashing for home; holding tightly to the reins, I run also, laughing as I have not laughed for days. Don, with his paws on the edge of the cart, barks furiously. Pulling and dragging with all my might,

at length I stop the pony. The little wretch looks at me almost respectfully as I turn him about, and he trots meekly back; he was only trying me out, to see of what stuff I was made. He stood as firmly as the Tower of London as I shut the gate and climbed into the cart. Then came the stream and the stone bridge and the village spire; and a row of small garden plots with yellow, late summer things blossoming in them, and Madge and Peter standing by a garden gate.

I knew at first glance that they must both come; now that I think of it, I have quite a garden, though it will seem little to one who has worked at the 'All; there are always heavy things to be done about the kitchen, and Peter knows more than he will admit about the drudgery necessary to sustain human life. Peter, it seems, has been a soldier, has served in the South African war, and is a time-expired man who has beaten his sword into

a ploughshare, — or is it a pruning hook? But none of his accomplishments is my real reason; the half-belligerent affection on the face of husband and wife shows me that they should not be separated.

Madge, the look of anxiety already lifting from her smooth and comely face, — one sees that look here in many of the unemployed, — looks questioningly at Peter when I extend my invitation. I assure him that I need a man to look after the garden and the pony; at this Puck pricks up his ears and gives me a half glance. Yes, I have decided to have him, if I may, for my very own. There is a remote something in Peter's gait and bearing that suggests the soldier, but it is the soldier whose long leisure re-acts against the discipline.

"But perhaps you were thinking of going to the war?" I ask.

"No, Miss," said Peter, "I weren't."

He spoke so emphatically that I may have raised my eyebrows; perhaps I shook my head. I shall be afraid of borrowing unconsciously some of the pony's gestures; these strong personalities always leave their impress.

"War," said Peter firmly, "is against my principles. I am a socialist."

"It's a fine way to keep from serving King and Country, being a socialist," said Madge unkindly. Madge is evidently not progressive.

"My fellow man," said Peter, striking the gate post with a heavy fist, "is more to me than King or 'Ouse of Lords."

"Or fellow woman, either," murmured Madge, thinking that I did not hear.

From these advanced radical theories Madge and I turn back, as women will, to the old and homely needs of human life. She fingers her apron.

"I'm sure, Miss, if the laundry could be put out —"

"Yes."

"And a charwoman for the rough scrubbing — "

"Yes."

"And if you wouldn't mind me knowing little about waiting at table — "

"With but one person in the family, that isn't very complex," I say reassuringly. Don looks reproachfully at me; was I forgetting him?

I watched Don to see how he would take them; his manner was perfection, — polite but distant, refusing any intimate advances, but refraining from growling. There was a certain approving condescension in his air, as if he thought they were quite well in their way. He never for a moment forgets that he is a gentleman's dog, and his flair for social distinctions is as fine as that of any of his fellow Oxford dons. That delicate snobbery showed to-day in his air of connoisseurship while he weighed the matter with

daintily snuffing nose and then assumed an air of invitation to these two to come and keep their place.

I was delighted when they said that they would come, and we trotted merrily home to the shining companionship of the hearth fire, flickering on pewter pots and copper pans as on my landlady's red cheeks; to the comfort — ah, that I, a twentieth-century American, dare confess it — of a feather bed!

September 29. Here I live in mine own hired house, like the gentleman in the Bible, — who was it, — Paul? I hope only that he had one half the sense of entire possession that is mine. I look at Madge and Peter, busy in kitchen and garden, at Don, guarding the little iron gate, at the pony grazing beyond the stream, and I feel like a feudal lord. Especially do I feel so when we rout out the utensils in the kitchen, — knives, forks,

skillets. Some of them surely antedate the feudal era; they were probably left by the cave men; their prehistoric shape, in its ancient British clumsiness, looks as if it might have archæological, if not practical, value. I shall use them for gardening; the forks will be a great help in wrestling with mother earth.

Wrestle I do, indoors and out; I dare not be idle, and besides, I like to do these things. The Vicar's lady, passing, is shocked to see me scraping the putty off of my new-old diamond-paned windows; but somebody had to get it off; Madge couldn't, so why not I? Madge watches me working about, torn between her old attitude of maid at the Hall, with its fixed ideas as to what the gentry should do, and a something new that is slowly creeping into her mind. Throughout England, I am told, the gentry are doing things they used not to do, — for economy, for possible service to the country in its day of

need. And it is slowly dawning on us all that its need is great. The Germans have been halted on the Marne, and we breathe more easily, but it is rumoured that they have brought their great siege guns up to Antwerp, and the poor Belgians are flocking over here in hordes.

Madge, as she sees me toiling over my chintz curtains, and sees the bothersome things come down to my undoing, wants to know why I wished to come, quite by myself; why I didn't take lodgings somewhere, — it would be far less trouble. She doesn't understand in the least when I tell her that I cannot endure the irrelevance of lodgings, the antimacassars, the hideous bric-a-brac, the rooms packed full of horrors, where I cannot collect my mind. A home of your own is worth while, if only to keep it bare of human clutter; bad pictures intimidate me; ugly upholstery defeats my soul. Of provincial England I could say, if it weren't profane,

all thy tidies and thy ugly reps have gone over me. The publicity of hotel or boarding house I cannot endure, nor the kind of tissue-paper life that one must live there. Not among gilt cornices but beside meadows and running waters I choose my lot. Your relatives are kindness itself in inviting me to stay with them, but just now I cannot bear kindness; I want people to be as cruel as God! Was I not lonely enough, after my own family had vanished into the silence; why did you come into my life only to leave me more alone?

This is my *apologia pro domicilio meo,* but why, after all, should I need to explain a longing for my own rooftree, my own hearth, my own pathway leading to my own front door? I must have come into the world with a belief that for every woman born was intended a little nook or corner or cranny of her own. So here is mine, a quarter of a mile from the village,

not many miles from the sea, seventy odd miles from London, and how far from that heaven where you are? Can you tell me the way and the length of the road? Sometimes it seems set on the very edge of eternity, and I keep expecting to see stray cherubim, seraphim, and angels stop to ask the rest of the way.

I haven't begun on the garden; in a way I haven't let myself see it, there has been so much to do in the house; but, if you will believe it, and of course you will, being an Englishman, a plum tree and a pear tree are espaliered on the sunny southern wall of the house, branching out a bit over one of the windows. There are two apple trees, a clump of holly, ferns in a corner, rosebushes, and climbing roses. I shall not know all the colours until next summer, though some of them bloom late; I have discovered white ones, and pale yellow, and one of a deep and lovely red. The garden is neglected, weedy, and grass-

grown, but I find hollyhocks, foxglove, larkspur, and a forgotten violet bed. A small kitchen garden borders my lady's garden, and Peter shall till this. Don walks up and down the paths with a step so exactly fitted to your old pace in the college gardens that I feel always a little shock of surprise in not seeing you, as of old, just ahead.

Scraps of conversation drift to me from Madge and Peter when they happen to work together; upon the invincibility of the British they agree, and upon the fact that no foe will ever dare set foot upon the British isles, but in matters of social opinion they are hopelessly at variance. Madge is a conservative, standing staunchly by the Church, the 'All, the 'Ouse of Lords; Peter is an extreme radical, a "hatheist", as he solemnly informed me, eager for anything new in word or thought, and usually misappropriating both. He reads American paper-

covered novels, and a touch of transatlantic slang creeps now and then into his conversation, or a queer abstract phrase from some socialist lecturer whom he doesn't understand but accepts entire. Many a bit of stubborn debate comes to me through open door or window, as Peter defends his rights as man and scoffs at the social system.

"Wy *'im* at the 'All? Wy not me?" was the last I heard.

"You!" said Madge scornfully. "You couldn't even stand up on the floors, they are that shiny and polished."

With the fragrance of ripening fruit, and the warmth of the brick wall about me, — September is September everywhere, — I sit here upon my own threshold, a worn old threshold made wise by the coming and going of life through unnumbered years. There is something comforting about a place where many lives have been lived; the windows have a

strange air of wisdom, as if experience itself were looking out. I am tired, physically tired, with all the work, but I am well content with it: are you? All within is nearly finished. Your books, for your mother gave me many of them, are in a set of shelves I had made by the fireplace; my own in a low case that runs all across one side of the room. The window seats have chintz cushions; two easy chairs flank the fireplace; the old walnut table with reading lamp is placed where it can command either the flame of the hearth or the sunset flame: do you like all this, I wonder? In the little dining room a stately armchair stands ready for you always, as befits the master of the house, and your place at table shall be always set, the cover laid. So begins our divine housekeeping, you on your side, I on mine — alas! — of the universe and life and time.

Last night I laid a scarf of yours, which

I had been wearing, across your chair; Don sniffed at it and whimpered, then jumped up into the chair and whined piteously. No, do not be afraid! I shall not whine, even if my heart break. I shall come to you smiling, belovèd, and whatever wrinkles are on my face shall not be worn by tears. Everybody is *game* in England now; I will be game too! There are no cowards among those who go to fight, or those who are left at home: my battlefield lies here. You need not think I am going to mourn in loneliness; I shall not let you go, though you are dead; I am going to live my life in and for you, and every least wish I ever heard you express shall be carried out. After dinner Don and I sat on the rug in front of the fire and talked about you; it is sorry comfort for both of us, but it is all we have. For him, as for me, I think, the sense of you comes more strongly in favoured nooks and corners, by the fire on the

hearth, or by the living room windows in the sunshine. He knows you better than anybody else does, except me, and I sometimes feel, — at least, he remembers farther back than I can, and I am envious of him and of every one else who knew you first. He has chosen his permanent abiding-place, for he went close to the right side of the hearth, sat down, wagged his tail beseechingly, and held up one paw as he does when he is begging for things.

So I have closed my little iron gate, — Madge, Peter, Don, and I inside, and all the world shut outside. Perhaps I am moved by the instinct of the hurt animal to go away by itself and hide. It cannot be wrong — now; henceforth I must live in the past; the dropping of the latch will be the signal, and the old days will slip back one by one over the brick wall. I shall establish a blockade; haven't I a right? The pain, at times, is more than I can bear, and every face I see recalls the

sight of happy people, the sight of wretched people alike. Safe, with my sorrow, inside these walls; and outside, the surge of great sorrows, anguish, perplexity.

October 8. Of course I take long walks day by day, yet nothing more intensifies my sense of loss, perhaps, because we walked so much together. The country is as green as it was that July day when we stopped and helped the haymakers in the Oxford meadows, and they jeered good-naturedly at our way of raking. I have found relief in watching the harvesting and the gathering of the fruit; looking resolutely at field and stream, centering mind and soul there, my grief softens and grows more kind. Everywhere I see the picturesque and finished charm of English life.

As I climb the hill past the church, the old, old woman who lives in the little

house by the lych gate, — the churchyard gate, the gate of the dead, — and sells gingerbread, biscuit, and ginger ale, is putting out her wares. She is so old, so much a part of the other world, she lives so near the edge of this, that I half suspect her, as I catch a glimpse of the green mounds through the rusted wrought-iron bars, of ministering to those we cannot see. None but the English would think of selling gingerbread at heaven's gate! Over the soft gurgle of ale from the stone jars we exchange greetings; she is only another of your daring and delightful incongruities, seen in the gargoyles on your cathedrals, the jokes in your tragedies, and the licensed mischief of your Oxford students on Commemoration Day.

The practical necessities of life take me, perforce, beyond my own domain. I have made the acquaintance of butcher and baker; that of the candlestick maker is still to come. The passing faces of people

in the village street, even of farmers stopping at the Inn, I begin to recognize; the latter look little more concerned about the present crisis than do their stout nags. Life goes quietly on here, as it has always done, I fancy; steps are scrubbed, and brasses of knocker and door latch are polished until you can see your face there. Is this encompassing calm mere apathy, or is it conscious strength? In his little shop the sleepy chemist wakens unwillingly to deal out his wares; the sleepy service goes on as of old in the little church. It is grey with dust; perhaps the caretaker does not think it worth while to dust in war-time, yet I doubt whether he knows there is war. In the bakeshop window day by day are displayed the great clumsy loaves of bread with the foolish little loaf tucked on at one side. Why? There's neither rhyme nor reason nor symmetry in it; the force of custom may be wise and may be merely stupid. Here one gets

constantly an impression of the overwhelming power of old habit and has a feeling that unless these people are shocked out of some of their ancient ways, disaster will follow. As I collect my wares, I fall to wondering whether either this nation, which worships its past, or we, who worship our future, is wholly right.

If, at times, a doubt intrudes in regard to this British clinging to the past, it is when the door of the one village shop tinkles at my entrance, and I ask in vain for the common necessities which it is supposed to supply. Here are pictures of Queen Victoria and all the royal family, but no tapes, no trustworthy thread, no pins, at least no pins with points. I brought home a paper of these soft little British crowbars, but alas! fingers cannot drive them in; they but crumple if, in desperation, you urge them too vigorously. How can a nation rule the sea; above all, how can it conquer in a mechan-

ical war when it cannot even make decent *pins?*

My mood softens as I stroll toward home; the glow of the blacksmith's forge fascinates me; there at least is tremendous strength, which is also skill, welding in this most ancient art, blow upon blow, old-fashioned horseshoes, which I am told are the best. Past quaint old doorways my path leads; the sight of these, and of fine old-fashioned faces behind the windowpanes, revives my normal mood of affection. What other people would, in reverence to wishes of those long dead, give out the dole of widows' bread at Westminster, the daily dole at Winchester, or administer the Leicester charity at Warwick in the spirit in which it was meant? What other people would be honest enough to do it? There is a basic honesty here which recalls the old tale of Lincoln and the money he saved for many years, in order to give back the identical

coins with which he had been entrusted.

As I enter my own domain, I observe once more that my gate does not latch properly; all this time, when I have found it left open, I have reproached Peter.

"Peter, you did not shut the gate."

"No, Miss," rubbing his forehead with the back of his hand.

"You must be more careful."

"Yes, Miss."

This has happened several times; to-day I found that no power could make it really latch, and I confided the fact to Peter.

"Yes, Miss, I knew it all along, Miss."

"But why—" there I stopped; I should rather never know why than to try to penetrate the wooden impenetrability of mind of the British serving-man. There are no "whys" in their vocabularies, no "whys" in their minds, only "thus and so." Things are as they are;

it has always been so; theirs to stand under the atlas weight of caste and class, prejudice and custom, not theirs to reason why, when they are blamed by their masters for things not their fault; theirs to go on digging, very respectfully digging.

"Peter, will you get some one to fix it, please?"

"Fix it, Miss?" He does not understand Americanese unless he chooses.

"Put it in order." I am quite red and haughty now, and as dignified as Queen Alexandra.

"I'll try, Miss. I expect that was broken a long time ago." Peter half salutes and goes on spading the earth for next year's flowers.

"Peter," I say severely, "the most lamentable thing about you English is that you are always 'expecting' things that have already happened. It's both grammatically and politically wrong to expect things in the past." He has not the slight-

est idea of my meaning, but of course he assents.

"You were a soldier once, weren't you?"

"Yes, Miss. It's a nasty business."

"Slavery," I venture, "would be worse."

"I can't say, really," answers Peter.

"Sometimes I wonder that you do not volunteer for this war, Peter," I suggest.

Stolid Peter goes on digging.

"There h'isn't any war, Miss!"

"But Peter, what do you mean?"

A fine look of cunning incredulity overspreads Peter's broad face, as he stops and wipes his forehead, for this October day is warm.

"No, Miss; it is just a scare got up by the 'Ouse of Lords to frighting the common people."

"What for?" I ask stupidly.

"To take their minds off the 'Ouse of Lords; we had threatened their power,

'm, and they wish to keep their seats. It is what you call a roose."

"Peter," I say severely, "day by day we hear through the newspapers of terrible fighting going on all the time; how can you say such a foolish thing?"

"The newspapers, 'm," said Peter, with frightful audacity, "are corrupted, bought by the 'Ouse of Lords. They say what they are hordered to."

"The poor Belgians are pouring into this country," I say in wrath.

"Beg parding, Miss, but I haven't seen a Belgian," answers doubting Peter.

"Day by day we hear of recruits going by hundreds to the recruiting stations —"

"I'm not denying that they may be making up the army, 'm, and that there may be war some day; but that a war is on, I deny, 'm."

So this is what happens when the British lower classes begin to think! There really ought to be some better way of

bridging the gulf between their old, automatic habits and the new working of their minds.

"They are carrying soldiers across the Channel by thousands," I say indignantly.

"All bunkum, if you'll kindly excuse the word, Miss. Did Robinson Crusoe really happen? We 'ear of these things going on, but do *you* know of anybody who has actually been killed, 'm?" asks Peter.

I looked at him, but I could not speak. Where are you lying, dear, in that awful field of death?

October 11. I was pruning and tying up rose vines, by my wrought-iron gate that stands ajar, when I heard a noise, — first, a skurrying of feet, and a shout, then a rush of something small and swift. The tiniest grey kitten imaginable had dashed in through the opening and was trembling in a corner under my rosebush. I picked

it up and went quickly to the gate; there was a red-faced urchin waiting, his mouth open, a stone in one hand ready to throw at the kitten if it came out, but shy of entering, — the British respect for a gate! Neither my pleas nor my scolding brought a shade of expression to his face; it was as guileless, as soulless, as a jack-o'-lantern. I give the boy tuppence, and tell him to go away, and to be kind to animals; the kitten curls itself about my neck and purrs, as I work in the earth. Of course I shall keep it; I am glad that the latch will not hold, and I shall not even try to have it repaired. Perhaps my garden may serve as a refuge for small hunted things, suffering things. I might have a ring put on my gate; you remember the ring upon the cathedral door at Durham to which a fugitive could cling? All the village criminals — I wonder who the village criminals are? Probably the ones who look least so! — could cling to

it, and Peter could rescue them, and Madge and I could give them tea.

And now to help on the millennium a bit by establishing an intimacy between the refugee kitten and snobbish little Don. In his heart I think he wants to make friends; but when a common kitten, with no pedigree and no Oxford training, spits at him, what is he to do? He looks piteously at me as I bid him be gentle; sniffs in half friendly fashion, and keeps his delicate nose well away from the claws. Meanwhile, how can I teach the kitten *noblesse oblige?* I shall name it the Atom, because, it being (so much of the time) invisible, like the scientists I am unable to tell whether or not it exists; and because at moments it seems only a "mode of motion."

Not long after came a little squeal, as of a tiny pig; my flower beds! I hurry down; the gate is farther open, and there is a huge baby, a gingerbread baby, — no,

it is alive, but it has the shape of gingerbread babies in the shops, and it has the motions of a gingerbread baby, — not a joint in its body; "moving all together if it move at all." Its round blue eyes, its round red mouth look frightened in Don's presence and mine; then, with another little squeal, it flings itself upon Don, who draws away, looks at me inquiringly, with that questioning paw uplifted, shivering a little, all his class-consciousness astir: must he make friends with *this?*

It is a solid British lump, but friendly beyond belief. In feeling that it would further the *entente cordiale* between the two peoples, I find myself making a playhouse, with tiny pebbles. The infant Briton is not so phlegmatic, after all; it shouts with delight, flings itself upon my knees, and embraces them so suddenly and so lustily that I nearly fall over. . . . I must find out its name and send to London for a Teddy bear and some toys. My

gate is wide open, ever since Peter started to escort home my uninvited guest. . . .

It proves quite a day for adventure, and yet I have not been beyond my garden wall. As I sit on my threshold to watch the sunset, I see, pausing at that open gate, a tired-looking woman, with her baby in her arms. She starts to move away, but I speak to her, and she enters; at first glance I know that she is neither tramp nor beggar and half divine her errand. Yes, she is a soldier's wife; he is going in a few days to the front, and she is walking a good part of the way from the north of England to his training camp at Salisbury Plain, to let him see and say good-bye to the baby on whom he has never set his eyes; it is only seven weeks old and was born after he volunteered. She had money enough to come only a certain distance by train.

The mother is a north-country woman, with a touch of Scotch about her, clean

and sweet, though a bit dusty with the long road. Of course I take her in for the night; we have a wee guest-chamber. Don and the kitten and I try to make friends with the baby, but it merely howls. Madge wanted to keep the travellers in the kitchen, but I would not permit this and said that my soldier's wife must dine with me. I forgot to say, I took it for granted that Madge would know enough to lay another cover at table and was not prepared to see the stranger in your place. Naturally, though I winced, I could not make any change, and there she sat, a bit awed; probably she would have been happier in the kitchen with the baby; but she brightened up and told me some of the border legends, when she found that I already knew some. My desire to take her out of your chair lasted through the soup and half-way through the modest roast; when we reached the salad, there was a hurt sense

somewhere within me that it was right. I had become a Christian by the time the dessert came on, and in the afterglow by the fire, while she sang her baby to sleep most enchantingly with an old north-country song, I resolved to do just this: keep your chair for wandering guests, fugitives from these highways and hedges. Your intense present life with me, your subtle nearness needs, after all, no help from outer object or material thing. Alas for my blockade! . . . Forts are proving useless, the war news says.

It sets me to thinking, and I sit by the fire long after my guests have gone to sleep. After all, it seems a pity to work so hard over a house and to get it ready, unless you get it ready for something. I don't know how it could be managed in a maiden lady's home, but what if I resolved that all the things that should happen in a house should happen here? In my heart of hearts I know, in spite of

this blinding sorrow, that I do not want to be shut off from the main streams of human life. They used to tell me that I have a genius for home; suppose I establish this as a wee home in a warring universe for the use of whomsoever? Not a Home with a large H, but a little home, with a dog and a cat and a singing teakettle. The Lord did not make me for great causes, — not for a philanthropist, nor a leader of men, nor a suffragette. I have no understanding of masses of mankind, and so am lost in this era, and hopelessly behind the times. Life seems to me, as it did to my grandfather, primarily as the conscientious fulfilment of individual obligation, which inevitably reaches out to other lives. The troubles of individual men and women and children I used to understand, to try to help; perhaps I can again. Though it means confessing that I belong to a type of woman rapidly becoming extinct, all my

life long I have felt that I should be content with a hearthstone and threshold of my own, with natural relationships and real neighbours. If I can understand and pity and try to help, why am I not doing it now, pig that I am? Birth, and death, and marriage, and hours of common life! Ah, if the little red house could only lend itself once more to all human need!

October 15. My Jeannie Deans is gone; she was in such haste that she could hardly wait for her breakfast. I got mine host to drive her to the station, for I shall not let her walk the rest of the way, and I gave her all the money I could find in the house, including all I could extract from Madge's and Peter's pockets, and from Madge's broken teapot. Unfortunately, it was not so much as I could have wished, but it will provide for a few days. Now we haven't ha'pence in the house; so much the better, if the burglar

with whom I am threatened by the boding village gossips should call; but I must drive over to Shepperton, the market town, and call at the Outland and County Bank, and get some of those clean, crisp, dainty notes that are a delight to touch.

It seems lonely without Jeannie; Peter has gone away over hill and dale to get fertilizer for my garden; my house is empty, swept, and garnished — I have been dreading the moment when everything would be done. I carry on Madge's education, for I am trying to teach her English history. Yesterday it was William the Conqueror; she did not believe a word of it, but she very politely said: "Just fancy!" Most of these people know so little of their own history that they scorn the idea that anything unfortunate ever happened to England and scoff at a statement that she has ever been worsted in a fight. It has always been as it is, the King on the throne, the Vicar

in the pulpit, the Squire at the Hall, and the island secure from all attack. To butcher and baker and candlestick maker in the village, danger or threatened change is inconceivable; England's past defeats sound to them like fairy stories devised by enemies, though they lend a willing ear to the tale of England's triumphs. Going back to ancient times, I told Madge about the Danes and their landing on this coast, about the burning and pillaging done by these wild folk: all that she remarked was: "How awkward!" I could not get her to entertain for a moment the idea, though we are only a few miles from the North Sea, that the enemy could ever land on English shores. "Hengland rules the seas," and that is all there is to it. Antwerp has fallen, but even this does not shake the prevailing sense of security. Antwerp is not England!

In contemporary matters Madge is

quite interested; she thinks great scorn of the suffragettes: " Breaking the windows, 'm, and biting Mr. Hasquith, 'm; it's not for ladies to be taking part in public matters; they 'aven't it in them! " I reminded her of Queen Elizabeth, but she had never heard of Queen Elizabeth, and refused to entertain the idea that any such woman had ever ruled England. Even the tale of the Virgin Queen boxing the courtiers' ears she disbelieved with the rest. She admitted Queen Victoria, but said that it was " so different, 'm, and she a mother and a grandmother."

Some of this went on while Madge was doing up the guest room; she wanted simply to spread the coverlid over the bed, as it probably would not be used again for a long time. I insisted, however, that the bed be made ready with fresh sheets; some one might stop at any minute, I explained. Madge looked at me with question in her eye; her impression of me up

to this point is that I am an amiable lunatic who may at any minute change to violence.

After luncheon I made Peter go and get the pony for me; yes, the pony is now exclusively my own, for as long a time as I wish. He is almost the most interesting personality I have ever known, — wilful, conscientious, full of conviction in regard to what he considers his duty and what he looks upon as his privileges. There are spurts, attended by dashing heels and swishing tail, of strict and spirited performance of his alloted tasks; there is peasant stubbornness, attended by stiffened legs and tenacious hoofs, of resistance to evil. He is British, or Scotch, to the core. Evidently he feels that his ancestors had a hand, a hoof, I mean, in the Magna Charta, and all the liberty that is coming to him he means to have, and all the obligations resting upon him he means to fufil, in his own way, at his own time. Some-

times he will do far more than he is asked, scornful of other people's ideas; has he not his own? He is full of punctiliousness, decency, order, when he feels like it; of utmost freedom, even license also, when he feels like it. Now and then he runs away, purely, I think, on the principle of: "British ponies never shall be slaves." Gentle when you would least expect it, fractious when you are most unprepared, he looks upon whizzing motor cars with calm tolerance, so unlike my own feeling that I may well cultivate his acquaintance in order to learn that wise indifference. It is as if he were disdainful of anything the modern world could invent to frighten him or get in his way; here is an ancient British self-possession, a sense of ownership in the soil. His ancestors were here hundreds of years before these trifling modernisms appeared; William the Conqueror and his Norman steeds were but parvenus and upstarts to them. He

will shy at a floating feather, but I doubt if he would shy at a Zeppelin. Like many another staunch character, he takes gallantly the real troubles of life, balking only at the trifles.

"I should like to know," I said meekly, as we started, "whether it is one of my days for obeying you, or one of your days for obeying me? When I find out, I shall conduct myself accordingly." I got no answer, yet I soon discovered. There is really something uncanny about him; he seems to know more than horse or human should know; to have foreknowledge of events. I must not tell his master, or the charges will be raised from five shillings a week perhaps to eight; after all, eight shillings for supernatural wisdom would not be unreasonable! On the other hand, if it was just plain British contrariness, eight shillings would be too much, as there is such an over-supply of the commodity.

## THE WORN DOORSTEP

I was driving out in the forest to westward, and it is very beautiful with its great oaks and birches, and its loveliness of yellowing fern. In spite of the mellow Octoberness everywhere, I was thinking sad thoughts; all day you can drive here and yet hardly cross one man's possessions; much of the land lies idle, while people starve in England; much of it is preserved, — the poor tame pheasants are as friendly as domestic hens. The tax for charity here is one shilling fourpence a pound; as I read this, I thought of London with its starving poor, its ribald poor, and I wondered if this great kingdom will vanish because the people do not pull together better. The blind selfishness of the upper class with their glass-guarded walls is a greater menace than the German siege guns.

I came to a cross road, or cross path, grassy paths both, with creeping green moss among the roots of the trees on either

side. It was hard to decide which way to go; I chose the right and pulled the rein; Puck chose the left and started. I tugged at the right and told him to go on; he said he wouldn't; again I told him, and he shook his head, shook himself all over with his head down, until his harness rattled. When I told him a third time, he stamped, kicked, and pulled with all his might to the left. Of course he got his way; some people passed; I was not going to be convicted of inadequate horsemanship, being only an American, so I assumed a calm and masterful British look, as if that were the way I had all along meant to go, and we jogged on. The self-satisfaction in that little creature's air! He turned his head around now and then, trying to see how I was taking it; having had his own way, he went at a jolly pace; he loves to start rabbits and make the pheasants fly up. Presently, at a turn in the road, he shied;

he did it quite theatrically, as if he had worked it all out in his mind and had achieved the intended effect. He expected me to be startled and to rein him in, fighting to control him, but I did nothing of the kind. I merely let the reins lie loose and watched him; he subsided very suddenly and dejectedly at having lost his fun.

Then I saw what he was shying at and stopped him; I think that he had known all along what he was going to find! There, under a great oak tree, partly hidden by tall bracken, lay a girl with her eyes closed, her hat partly off her head, looking like one who was very tired and had fallen in her tracks to go to sleep. In a minute I was at her side, holding tightly to the reins, for fear of what that little wretch might do, but he was as immovable as Stonehenge.

She was quite young, very wan and pale, fairly well dressed but crumpled

looking. Her hair was dark, and her eyes, when she slowly opened them, proved to be dark also.

I do not know yet whether she had fainted, or whether she was asleep from exhaustion; her poor feet showed that she had walked many miles, for the soles of her shoes were worn through. At sight of me she sat up, looking frightened, but, evidently finding that I was not so terrible, at length smiled back, — a faint little smile. I knew enough to be silent at first; this is something that I have learned from animals: there are sympathies, understandings, that antedate words. When I asked her very softly if she were ill, she shook her head, not understanding. I tried French, and, though my French is odd, I know, she brightened, clasped her hands together, giving a great sigh, and then tears began to roll down her face. That villain of a pony looked around now and then as if to say: "*Who* was right

about the road? You would never have found her if I had not had my way."

If he had been commissioned by the government to help in giving first aid, he could not have acted with more sense of responsibility than he did in helping me take her home, standing motionless while she climbed into the cart, so weak with hunger, she confessed, that she could hardly move, — then speeding fast where the road was smooth, and going very slowly where the carters' wheels have left deep ruts in the mossy soil. He really has more than human sense at times! Don, of his own accord, leaped in beside the fugitive; at times I think that his spirit is really becoming more catholic, and that he demands less in the way of credentials and introductions than of old. The girl's pluck interested me, for, though she could hardly hold herself upright, she refused my help. Suddenly, from nowhere, a phrase flashed into my mind, " L'Inde-

pendence Belge", and I knew — what afterward proved to be true — that she was one of the many Belgian refugees in England, though why she was wandering about by herself in this remote corner of England I did not know until afterward. As we jogged on, over the meadows and through the village street, she held herself so bravely that nobody stared, though she was white to the lips. She even managed to walk into the house, but, once inside, sank down on the couch and fainted quite away. Madge and I worked over her, giving her drops of warm milk with a wee bit of brandy, taking the shoes from her poor blistered feet, and bathing them. You should have heard Madge when I told her that I thought the girl was one of the fugitive Belgians; to take a red-hot poker to the Kaiser seemed to be her lightest wish for vengeance.

When our guest was in bed, all fresh and clean, with her hair brushed smoothly

from her forehead, I could see that she was a sweet and wholesome maiden, with a comely, housewifely air, and my heart ached for her sufferings. She ate a little, then lay with her eyes full of tears that she would not let fall; she kept winking her long lashes to keep them back. Don jumped up beside her and snuggled close; she smiled, lifted her hand to his head for a minute, then she went to sleep. Such sleep I never saw, — deep, long, dreamless; hour by hour she lay there, not moving all night long, for I crept in now and then: I could not sleep. Don kept watch until morning.

She did not waken until after ten; there was a flush in her cheeks, and her eyes were starry, but in her face, young as she seemed, was a foreshadowing of the worn look of age and sorrow that the years should bring, not the German army! She wore an air of wistful questioning to which there is no answer, as she lay twist-

ing weakly a simple ring about her third finger.

We had a funny time trying to talk; La Fontaine's fables and Racine's *Athalie,* as taught in a young ladies' finishing school, are not the best basis for a conversation on the practical needs of life. I wanted to ask her if she liked sugar and cream in her coffee; all I could think of was

"C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit,
Ma mère Jézebel devant moi s'est montrée."

I did succeed in telling her that this was probably not as good as Belgian coffee; she sipped it gratefully and nibbled her toast, putting her hand on mine and saying that it was "delicious, Mademoiselle, but delicious."

My fugitive is still here; she was in bed two days, and then I let her get up. She is wearing one of my gowns, and she spends much of her time in the garden in

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the grapevine arbour, sitting very still, with the shadow of the leaves upon her face. Don stays with her much of the time, and she seems to like this; and the country smell of the garden comforts her a little, I think, — the odour of the red apples ripening in the sun and of grapes that will not quite ripen. She rarely moves, except when a drifting autumn leaf falls on lap or shoulder; it is as if body, mind, and soul were exhausted by the awful shock of her experience, and she could not gather up her vital forces. I can only dumbly wonder what terrors she has gone through, what unspeakable things she has seen.

Her name is Marie Lepont; father and mother she has not, but she lived with an aunt in a little villa near Brussels, — with a garden like this, only *plus grand,* and she had a lover; oh, yes, for two years she had been betrothed. I could not understand all that she said, but she told of

their awful suspense in waiting for the Germans and of their taking refuge in the cellar, — the French for cellar I had never learned, so she showed me my own. Then came the flight, of old men, women, children, and pitiful animals; sickness, and falling by the way. Her aunt died from sheer exhaustion in a peasant's hut and was hastily buried at night. She could hardly tell what had happened, only that she was quite lost and separated from everybody she had ever known. Her lover was not in Brussels when the crisis came, and she had had no tidings from him. Evidently she had been swept over in a great wave of terrified humanity and had found herself on a steamer crowded with refugees. She can remember very little about the voyage, but with many others she reached a receiving camp near London, half ill and quite dazed. She searched vainly for her lover, and, not being able to discover any trace of him,

stole away from the camp in a state of mental bewilderment to try to find him. For days she walked, growing more and more spent and hungry, for she was shy about asking for food, and the country people did not understand her, evidently mistook her for a gypsy, and treated her somewhat churlishly. When she reached the forest she was happy, it was so cool and shady there, but she had little to eat save mushrooms. If I had tried to pluck mushrooms for my sustenance, it would have ended all my troubles! When I found her, she had had nothing to eat for more than twenty-four hours.

I watch her as she sits in the sunshine, and I multiply her by hundreds and thousands, innocent people, old folk and babies, old men and women lying down by the roadside to die, and the horror comes like a great tidal wave, sweeping all things before it, drowning all the joy of life and the old sweet ways of living.

It breaks on the brick wall of my garden and is driven back; I will not be overwhelmed by any anguish of human fate, my own, or that of any one else. Until some wandering star strikes the earth and shivers it to atoms, there is hope somewhere, and there are things to do! And Marie Lepont shall not be overwhelmed either, in spite of the terrible things she sees, waking or sleeping, for she starts up and cries out in the night; Don gives a little comforting, reassuring bark, and she goes to sleep again. I've got to find her lover for her, and how shall I begin?

I'll go and ask the pony!

October 14. My fugitive fits quietly into our life in the little red house, saying little, trying to do much, and smiling more and more. I do not talk to her, but now and then I sit and sew with her; I know that she is most domestic, and that this will make her feel at home, but I

should hate to have her examine my seams and hems, for I am no seamstress. I leave her much alone with the animals, and that seems to help more than anything else; the Atom spends much of its time on her shoulder. She has begged to be allowed to feed the chickens, for Madge has insisted on our having chickens, and Peter has constructed a yard for them, with a little house for winter, a bit down the stream. Sea gulls come sailing on wide beautiful white wings and descend to the chicken yard, walk about and steal food, to the helpless wrath of our fowls. Even Hengist and Horsa retreat; they are two twin stately cocks, and William the Conqueror is a bigger one, with spurs. He is quite the greatest coward in the yard, and entirely in awe of his Matildas. It is thus that I am making history concrete for Madge; my long line of British queens does credit to the dynasty, though they are a bit miscellaneous in ancestry. Boadicea

is a dark beauty, wild and fierce; my vainest, long-necked, red-brown hen is Queen Elizabeth; oh, the cackling when she lays an egg! The large, fat, rather stupid one is Queen Anne; I let Madge choose and name Queen Victoria herself, and she selected a plump and comely grey fowl, rather diminutive, with an imperative and yet appealing cluck, who will make, I know, an excellent wife and mother. It is all very well to keep hens and to eat their eggs, but I have given notice to Madge that not one of these companions of my daily life shall be sold to the butcher or served upon my table. The gingerbread baby comes giggling through the gate at least once a day, and it has taken a great fancy to Marie. It proves to be the eleventh and youngest child of my friend the blacksmith, and it has early developed, probably from constant association with so many swift feet, an abnormal talent for running away.

## THE WORN DOORSTEP

From morning until night I am busy with a thousand and one things, commonplace things mostly, in the house, or the village, or beyond. And wherever I go, you seem near, with your long, thin stride, and your preoccupied face, as if your feet had a bit of difficulty in keeping up with your mind. There is a strange sense always, when I walk in the forest, or along the highway, even when I go to Farmer Wilde's to see about butter and vegetables, that you are walking by my side.

Peter is very solicitous about the welfare of my guest, and I have seen him looking at her with vast pity in his eyes.

"Peter," I reminded him, "you can no longer say that you have not seen a Belgian refugee."

"No, Miss," was his only answer. He digs and prunes, still arguing his country's lack of need of him in this pretence of war.

"There's the British fleet, 'm," he ob-

served, with fine scorn. "It was hordered out at the beginning of this so-called war, and told to sink the henemy's fleet. Wot 'ave we 'eard of it since, 'm? Nothing, nothing at all. It's just bluff, 'm; the fleet is out on the 'igh seas for pleasure, junketing at our expense. Doubtless all the gentlemen enjoy a cruise."

"Peter," I say solemnly, "don't you really know that a German submarine sank three British cruisers on the twenty-second of September, the *Hague,* the *Cressy,* and the *Aboukir?* Do you think that the gallant men upon them went to the bottom for pleasure?"

Peter turned a trifle pale under the red of his forehead and cheeks.

"I heard that rumour," he remarked, with an attempt at airy skepticism, "and I dessay you believe it. I dessay you think it actually happened. But I refuse to believe it; when was the British fleet ever defeated?"

There was a tentative something, a touch of question, in the bravado of his denial.

"Peter," I suggest, "our fall gardening is not a national necessity; there is greater need of you elsewhere. Why not be a bomb-sweeper; you like the sea, I believe?" Madge listens, her broom suspended in mid-air, as if it were listening too. A look of embarrassment crosses Peter's face, as he rubs his cheek.

"The bombs are very explosive, I've 'eard, 'm."

"Peter," I say, "if this is an imaginary war, those are imaginary bombs and do not explode."

"I'm not so sure of that, Miss," says Peter shrewdly.

Another British cruiser, the *Hawke,* sunk October 16. There is wakening fear in the hearts of the English people, and there is deepening courage. The faces that I see here and in the near-by towns,

the letters that I get, have one expression. Party differences have almost ceased to exist in the political world, and in other ways, I think, the nation is being welded into one, as it has never been. Even the voice of the Vicar's lady has lost something of its condescension in speaking to common folk; I saw her at the blacksmith's as I took the gingerbread baby home for the eighth time, and she spoke with less of an air of coming down to the level of her audience than I should have believed possible. The gentry are behaving a bit less as if the earth were their private monopoly, and the subgentry, like our Vicaress, are taking the cue.

A few days ago I went to London, chiefly to get clothing for Marie and to set on foot inquiries about her betrothed. Nothing seemed greatly changed, save that there were fewer people in the streets and the restaurants, and that many uniforms are in evidence. The theatres are

open, and people are going about their work and their play in quite usual fashion, but their faces wear a different expression, an impersonal look, and a certain quiet exaltation. Oh, if the real England, that England that I know chiefly through the expression of her inmost self in her matchless literature, and through you, could only win over that other of high, excluding walls and ancient entailed rights of selfishness and of belittling snobbishness! You will admit that something needs righting in a social condition represented by the tale of the two sisters at Oxford, — one married to a tailor, one married to a University professor, — who did not dare speak to each other in the street for fear of consequences. I am hopelessly democratic; the wonderfully good manners of the perfectly trained English servant seem to me vastly higher, as human achievement, than the manner of the superior who speaks brutally to him. The sur-

prised gratitude of many of the maids and scrub-women here when one addresses them as if they really were human beings is piteous.

Yet I know that though these things be true, they reflect but the surface, not the depths. Something in this crisis, something even in Peter's crude attacks, has roused a deep race instinct in me, long dormant. Though my forebears set sail for America in the 1630's, my sense of the identity of our destiny with that of England deepens every day. I am ceasing to say "your", and unconsciously slipping into "our"; perhaps I have been trying to criticize, to point out the things that are wrong, partly as a measure of self-protection, for I am growing sorry that the Revolutionary War ever happened! I long for England's victory in this war, knowing that she is right; I dimly suspect that I should long for it were she right or wrong; and I feel a little thrill of pride

that my home is in this England of yours, of ours.

Even I, who am often indignant in watching the Englishman's manner toward those other Englishmen whom he considers his social inferiors, can discern his profound sense of responsibility toward them. Forgetting the mistakes of to-day, and thinking of the long development, one can but be aware in England of a stable, enduring spirituality, a practical idealism, unlike that of the earlier, idealistic Germany, — a something tangential, disassociated with life, — in that it is a constant sense of inner values working out in everyday ways and habits. Those mystical habits of dreaming fine things that are never done will not save the world. In my growing love for England, I am more and more aware of its disciplined, mellow civilization, treasuring the old and sacred in beliefs, in institutions, in buildings; its right, controlling habits; its thousand and

one wise departures from the measure of rule and thumb; its uncodified, unformulated truth of action; its conduct far more logically right than its laws. In the very reproach oftenest brought against England I find the deepest reason for trusting her, that she allows human instinct a larger place and mere intellectual theory a smaller place than does any other nation in working out its destiny. I am deeply puzzled by my sense of the Englishman's wrong attitude toward his supposed inferior while I recognize that inner instinctive sense of necessary adjustments, that genius for living that makes them the best colonizers in the world and makes their rule the most lasting anywhere.

I consulted some of the chief authorities in the Belgian relief work in regard to Marie, — your England shows the real humanity at the heart of her in this magnificent hospitality to an outraged nation,

— and I put advertisements into several papers. At home all was well, save that William the Conqueror had choked, trying to swallow a piece of English bacon too large for him, and was dead. So perish all who lust for conquest!

October 24. Two days ago came a domestic, not to say a social crisis. Two of the county ladies called on me, accompanied by the Vicaress; they must have been told, I think, of my uncle the banker! Forgive this gibe, — I could not resist making it; we always disputed, you remember, as to whether your countrymen or mine were the more devout worshippers of gold. To say truth, I have met these ladies at one or two committee meetings in our relief work, and I feel duly honoured by the call. I ring for Madge; Madge does not appear; going to the kitchen, I find it empty, the fire out, water dripping forlornly from the faucet.

## THE WORN DOORSTEP

The coal in the sitting room grate I replenish myself and face the horror of the situation: three English ladies and no tea! No one knows better than I what blasphemy it would be to omit the sacred British rite of tea, which is even more established than the Established Church. Rising to the occasion, I heat water in a little copper kettle on the coals in the sitting room, — "So resourceful, as all Americans are," murmurs one lady. I concoct tea, and it proves very good tea indeed, served with appetizing little cakes from yesterday's baking. My guests go away mollified; not so am I! One of them had so many scathing things to say about England's policies at home and abro[illegible]he political friendship with Russia [illegible]sert[illegible] Persia, the treatment o[illegible]nd, [illegible]ismanagement of the [illegible] wa[illegible] I was driven to an [illegible]e of [illegible]urely there is some-[illegible] gr[illegible]sh men and Eng-

lish women to do now than to stand aloof and criticize! When I told her that I thought it was a pity to confuse the soul of the English people with mistakes of contemporary statesmen, she looked at me blankly, nor could I make her understand. It is odd for me, who have so derided our Anglomaniacs and superficial imitators of the English, to come so hotly to the defence of England. I hardly know myself what is going on within me. It is the England-in-the-long-run that I reverence, the England of the great poetry, that soul of England full of "high-erected thoughts", of sunny faiths, and sweet humanities. And of course, through you too, I know its very best, — the breeding that makes no boast; its fine reserve; its self-control; its matchless, silent courage.

It is a chilly day; Don and the Atom cuddle side by side at the hearth; they are great friends now. Marie returns

with bright eyes and red cheeks from a walk. Presently home comes Peter, who has been away on some errand of his own, to a fireless hearth and an empty room. Home and garden and adjacent field he searches in vain.

"She will 'ave gone to one of her friends, Miss," says Peter stoutly, proceeding to lay a fire.

I assent, but with misgiving. Madge had never failed before, nor had she even gone away for half an hour without telling me. As Peter helps me prepare a simple meal to serve instead of dinner, I turn the conversation toward military training and matters of war. My own contributions to the conversation, in regard to cavalry, infantry, and manœuvering I should not care to have Lord Kitchener hear. Very casually I remark that, if I were a man, I should like to be a soldier.

"Would you now, Miss?" Peter re-

sponds amiably, as he takes up the toasting-fork.

"There's a recruiting station at Shepperton," I suggest, as I cut the bread. "There are five thousand men encamped for training in Wellington Park; and I've been told that there are several hundred in the nearest village, — what is it, Silverlea? I hardly see how you can go about so much without seeing them."

"It is odd, isn't it?" Peter answers wonderingly. I found out afterward that the villain had spent that very day at Wellington Park, watching the recruits drill.

As it grew later, more chilly and darker on that autumn night, I could see the British husband's awful wrath growing within Peter; he evidently thought that his wife had run away with some one. Naturally I had no idea what had happened, but I had my doubts of this. In the first place, she was fundamentally

good; in the second place, one Briton was, I felt sure, enough for Madge.

Don and the Atom were the only members of the family who really enjoyed their evening meal that day. They lapped from the same saucer, though not at the same moment, each politely waiting a turn, the closest of allies, and doing a bit after in the way of washing each other up. Marie watched me with big, sympathetic brown eyes, and said nothing. When nine o'clock came, I was as worried as was Peter, though I did not admit it. We had decided that he should go to the Inn for the pony, and that we would begin a systematic search. He went to his room to get ready and presently appeared, alternately red with wrath and pale with anxiety.

"My clothes, 'm, my Sunday clothes are gone. Boots and all, 'm. And my 'at, my Sunday 'at."

Despair could go no further than this

intonation of Peter's Sunday 'at; would that any 'at had ever meant so much to me!

"She 'as given them to 'im, Miss."

"To whom?"

"That's just what I don't know, 'm."

What could one think? Had Madge, the admirable, indeed a lover? That was unthinkable; there must have been some accident. At least, there was nothing to do but to notify mine host of the Inn, and to present the case to the local Dogberry.

We were ready to start, when I heard a little click of my garden gate, and soft footsteps came up the brick walk, down which streamed the light of the porch lamp. Red rage mounted to Peter's eyes. "It's that man," he cried, "in my clothes!" I kept a detaining arm on Peter's sleeve, — his second-best sleeve. Where had his best been intriguing?

The kitchen door opened softly, very

softly; we stood breathless in the corner. If it were a burglar, we were ready; were not all the massive British kitchen utensils near? The lamplight fell full upon the face and form of a strange man, a very strange man, the strangest I ever saw, plump, round of face, with straggling, irregular locks of hair that had been newly shorn, — a decidedly strange man, in Peter's clothes.

"You — you hussy!" said Peter, but the sorry epithet expressed a world of relief, even, I thought, of endearment.

One would have supposed that Madge could not grow redder; yet her face became even more a flame.

"You, a respectable British female," said Peter, advancing with slow heaviness of tread, as if Madge's end would really come when he reached her and the Sunday clothes; "You, a British female, and the wife of an honest man, out on the highway in a man's clothes, *my* clothes." He

open, and people are going about their work and their play in quite usual fashion, but their faces wear a different expression, an impersonal look, and a certain quiet exaltation. Oh, if the real England, that England that I know chiefly through the expression of her inmost self in her matchless literature, and through you, could only win over that other of high, excluding walls and ancient entailed rights of selfishness and of belittling snobbishness! You will admit that something needs righting in a social condition represented by the tale of the two sisters at Oxford, — one married to a tailor, one married to a University professor, — who did not dare speak to each other in the street for fear of consequences. I am hopelessly democratic; the wonderfully good manners of the perfectly trained English servant seem to me vastly higher, as human achievement, than the manner of the superior who speaks brutally to him. The sur-

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Yet I know that though these things be true, they reflect but the surface, not the depths. Something in this crisis, something even in Peter's crude attacks, has roused a deep race instinct in me, long dormant. Though my forebears set sail for America in the 1630's, my sense of the identity of our destiny with that of England deepens every day. I am ceasing to say "your", and unconsciously slipping into "our"; perhaps I have been trying to criticize, to point out the things that are wrong, partly as a measure of self-protection, for I am growing sorry that the Revolutionary War ever happened! I long for England's victory in this war, knowing that she is right; I dimly suspect that I should long for it were she right or wrong; and I feel a little thrill of pride

that my home is in this England of yours, of ours.

Even I, who am often indignant in watching the Englishman's manner toward those other Englishmen whom he considers his social inferiors, can discern his profound sense of responsibility toward them. Forgetting the mistakes of to-day, and thinking of the long development, one can but be aware in England of a stable, enduring spirituality, a practical idealism, unlike that of the earlier, idealistic Germany, — a something tangential, disassociated with life, — in that it is a constant sense of inner values working out in everyday ways and habits. Those mystical habits of dreaming fine things that are never done will not save the world. In my growing love for England, I am more and more aware of its disciplined, mellow civilization, treasuring the old and sacred in beliefs, in institutions, in buildings; its right, controlling habits; its thousand and

one wise departures from the measure of rule and thumb; its uncodified, unformulated truth of action; its conduct far more logically right than its laws. In the very reproach oftenest brought against England I find the deepest reason for trusting her, that she allows human instinct a larger place and mere intellectual theory a smaller place than does any other nation in working out its destiny. I am deeply puzzled by my sense of the Englishman's wrong attitude toward his supposed inferior while I recognize that inner instinctive sense of necessary adjustments, that genius for living that makes them the best colonizers in the world and makes their rule the most lasting anywhere.

I consulted some of the chief authorities in the Belgian relief work in regard to Marie, — your England shows the real humanity at the heart of her in this magnificent hospitality to an outraged nation,

— and I put advertisements into several papers. At home all was well, save that William the Conqueror had choked, trying to swallow a piece of English bacon too large for him, and was dead. So perish all who lust for conquest!

October 24. Two days ago came a domestic, not to say a social crisis. Two of the county ladies called on me, accompanied by the Vicaress; they must have been told, I think, of my uncle the banker! Forgive this gibe, — I could not resist making it; we always disputed, you remember, as to whether your countrymen or mine were the more devout worshippers of gold. To say truth, I have met these ladies at one or two committee meetings in our relief work, and I feel duly honoured by the call. I ring for Madge; Madge does not appear; going to the kitchen, I find it empty, the fire out, water dripping forlornly from the faucet.

The coal in the sitting room grate I replenish myself and face the horror of the situation: three English ladies and no tea! No one knows better than I what blasphemy it would be to omit the sacred British rite of tea, which is even more established than the Established Church. Rising to the occasion, I heat water in a little copper kettle on the coals in the sitting room, — "So resourceful, as all Americans are," murmurs one lady. I concoct tea, and it proves very good tea indeed, served with appetizing little cakes from yesterday's baking. My guests go away mollified; not so am I! One of them had so many scathing things to say about England's policies at home and abroad, the political friendship with Russia, the desertion of Persia, the treatment of Ireland, the mismanagement of the present war, that I was driven to an attitude of defence. Surely there is something greater for English men and Eng-

lish women to do now than to stand aloof and criticize! When I told her that I thought it was a pity to confuse the soul of the English people with mistakes of contemporary statesmen, she looked at me blankly, nor could I make her understand. It is odd for me, who have so derided our Anglomaniacs and superficial imitators of the English, to come so hotly to the defence of England. I hardly know myself what is going on within me. It is the England-in-the-long-run that I reverence, the England of the great poetry, that soul of England full of "high-erected thoughts", of sunny faiths, and sweet humanities. And of course, through you too, I know its very best, — the breeding that makes no boast; its fine reserve; its self-control; its matchless, silent courage.

It is a chilly day; Don and the Atom cuddle side by side at the hearth; they are great friends now. Marie returns

with bright eyes and red cheeks from a walk. Presently home comes Peter, who has been away on some errand of his own, to a fireless hearth and an empty room. Home and garden and adjacent field he searches in vain.

"She will 'ave gone to one of her friends, Miss," says Peter stoutly, proceeding to lay a fire.

I assent, but with misgiving. Madge had never failed before, nor had she even gone away for half an hour without telling me. As Peter helps me prepare a simple meal to serve instead of dinner, I turn the conversation toward military training and matters of war. My own contributions to the conversation, in regard to cavalry, infantry, and manœuvering I should not care to have Lord Kitchener hear. Very casually I remark that, if I were a man, I should like to be a soldier.

"Would you now, Miss?" Peter re-

sponds amiably, as he takes up the toasting-fork.

"There's a recruiting station at Shepperton," I suggest, as I cut the bread. "There are five thousand men encamped for training in Wellington Park; and I've been told that there are several hundred in the nearest village, — what is it, Silverlea? I hardly see how you can go about so much without seeing them."

"It is odd, isn't it?" Peter answers wonderingly. I found out afterward that the villain had spent that very day at Wellington Park, watching the recruits drill.

As it grew later, more chilly and darker on that autumn night, I could see the British husband's awful wrath growing within Peter; he evidently thought that his wife had run away with some one. Naturally I had no idea what had happened, but I had my doubts of this. In the first place, she was fundamentally

good; in the second place, one Briton was, I felt sure, enough for Madge.

Don and the Atom were the only members of the family who really enjoyed their evening meal that day. They lapped from the same saucer, though not at the same moment, each politely waiting a turn, the closest of allies, and doing a bit after in the way of washing each other up. Marie watched me with big, sympathetic brown eyes, and said nothing. When nine o'clock came, I was as worried as was Peter, though I did not admit it. We had decided that he should go to the Inn for the pony, and that we would begin a systematic search. He went to his room to get ready and presently appeared, alternately red with wrath and pale with anxiety.

"My clothes, 'm, my Sunday clothes are gone. Boots and all, 'm. And my 'at, my Sunday 'at."

Despair could go no further than this

intonation of Peter's Sunday 'at; would that any 'at had ever meant so much to me!

"She 'as given them to 'im, Miss."

"To whom?"

"That's just what I don't know, 'm."

What could one think? Had Madge, the admirable, indeed a lover? That was unthinkable; there must have been some accident. At least, there was nothing to do but to notify mine host of the Inn, and to present the case to the local Dogberry.

We were ready to start, when I heard a little click of my garden gate, and soft footsteps came up the brick walk, down which streamed the light of the porch lamp. Red rage mounted to Peter's eyes. "It's that man," he cried, "in my clothes!" I kept a detaining arm on Peter's sleeve, — his second-best sleeve. Where had his best been intriguing?

The kitchen door opened softly, very

softly; we stood breathless in the corner. If it were a burglar, we were ready; were not all the massive British kitchen utensils near? The lamplight fell full upon the face and form of a strange man, a very strange man, the strangest I ever saw, plump, round of face, with straggling, irregular locks of hair that had been newly shorn, — a decidedly strange man, in Peter's clothes.

"You — you hussy!" said Peter, but the sorry epithet expressed a world of relief, even, I thought, of endearment.

One would have supposed that Madge could not grow redder; yet her face became even more a flame.

"You, a respectable British female," said Peter, advancing with slow heaviness of tread, as if Madge's end would really come when he reached her and the Sunday clothes; "You, a British female, and the wife of an honest man, out on the highway in a man's clothes, *my* clothes." He

took hold of her arm, but gently; he would not have dared do otherwise. His wife looked at him steadily; he could not meet her glance, and his eyes fell.

"You're little better than a suffragette," he said weakly.

"That may be," said Madge, not without a certain loftiness, touching her hair with a novel feminine gesture, "that may be; but I *am* better than an able-bodied man that doesn't hoffer himself to his country. The suffragettes are fighting for theirs."

Peter was stricken; he had nothing to say. Don, arriving and unable to understand, barked wildly at Madge, and she seemed to mind his remarks much more than she had Peter's. I could help it no longer, and I burst out laughing.

"Madge," I asked, "where have you been?"

"I've been to the recruiting station at Shepperton, 'm," said Madge, with one

look at Peter. "I could bear it no longer; not a finger raised for King or Country."

Peter hung his head.

"Or the 'Ouse of Lords," Madge added witheringly. "I've been a-reading and a-reading, 'm, in those papers of yours about the French women that they find, fighting side by side with the men, for their country, and about the Russian women fighting too; but when I saw yesterday that German women had been found fighting, something gave way in my 'ead. I think you call it brain-storm in America, 'm. Those barbarian women, from God knows where, fighting for King and Country and their 'Ouse of Lords! I said to myself that the Snell family should send one man to the seat of war."

"I've been a-considering," said Peter. "I've been a-thinking it out."

"The present h'our," glared Madge, "is no time to *think!*"

"That was evidently the exact view of the European statesmen in August," I ventured, but Madge and Peter were too intent to catch my unkind whisper.

"So I put on Peter's clothes," said Madge, "and I went and walked to Shepperton and offered myself. Your Queen Elizabeth would have done as much."

*My* Queen Elizabeth, indeed!

"What did they say to you?" demanded Peter.

"I shan't tell you," said Madge. And she never did.

October 22. I am so excited that I can hardly write; my fingers tremble and make letters that look like bird-tracks. What do you think has happened? Who do you think stopped this afternoon at my little iron gate? It seems a terrible thing, an incredible thing to say, but I could hardly have been happier about it

if it had been you. I have so much to do, to think about, while Marie —? Her little world had all been swept away.

I was weeding this neglected garden; Peter, leaning on his spade, was eyeing me with some disapproval.

"Ladies shouldn't be doing that 'ard work, Miss," he observed.

"That's a queer opinion for a socialist," I remarked, tugging at a burdock root. He let me tug and went on with the exposition of his political opinions, quite unaware of my meaning.

"This need not keep you from working, Peter," I suggested. "I've no intention of spading that bed."

He dug his spade in with a little grunt.

"Everybody ought to work; that should be the first article of your socialist creed."

"It isn't, 'm," said Peter eagerly.

"Wouldn't you respect the House of Lords more if they actually worked,

Peter?" This brought him to a full stop.

"They do less 'arm as it is, Miss," he said darkly.

Here we heard the gate creak; the broken latch gives a little unnecessary click. An odd figure was standing there, looking like a tramp, with worn and battered clothing, a Derby hat with holes in it, and dark hair straggling over his forehead. Don, catching sight of him, barked furiously; I never heard him bark that way. It was as if the whole outraged spirit of the British upper classes were crying out upon the poverty and the misery they have helped create; it was a perfect yelp of class-consciousness. This naturally enlisted my sympathy on the side of the tramp, and I scolded Don and even slapped him a little. I've told him often enough that there is really nothing so vulgar as display of a sense of social superiority, and I do not like these re-

lapses from the democratic spirit that I am trying to cultivate in him.

It was the way in which the tramp watched me that made me suspect that he was not a tramp at all; he had big, brown, appealing eyes, like those of a nice dog, — not Don, but a friendly shepherd dog. The way in which he took off his battered hat enlightened me further, as did his little wistful smile. His face was a bit dirty, but my face has been dirty in times past; so, doubtless, has yours, Lord Hamlet. When I greeted him with good afternoon, he took a piece of paper from his pocket, and at first I wondered if he were an Armenian with lace, going about with a letter of introduction from a pastor, — or don't you have them in England? But he did not look like an Armenian, and he very evidently did not have lace, or any other kind of luggage. The paper proved to be the advertisement that I had put in a London paper, — and as

I took it, it struck me that those holes in his hat might be bullet holes.

"You're not really Henri Dupré?"

"I am," he said simply. My French is fairly inadequate in my calmest moments; in times of excitement it is non-existent, but he must have understood the joy in my face, and the hand I held out in welcome. He shook his head; his hand was not clean; my own was less so, and I was so proud! As I told Peter, if I had not been weeding, our guest would not have been properly greeted. Don, the wretched little creature, taking his cue from me, was gaily barking a welcome in a wholly different tone of voice from that which he had used at first. You see, he never would have known that the wayfarer was respectable if he had not considered himself properly introduced by my handshake.

"Is Marie Lepont here?"

I told him in my matter-of-fact way

that she was, and I said nothing more; they might do their own explaining, I thought, as they understood their own language, not to speak of anything else, far better than I. So I only motioned to him and went on tiptoe to the corner of the house; Marie was sitting in the garden, as she sits so often, in the rocking-chair, knitting, knitting for the soldiers. The air is full of the fragrance of ripening apples, of falling leaves, and fading fern. She is very quiet in the sunshine, and the shadows of the grapevine leaves upon her face hardly change for half an hour at a time. I motioned to him, and then I ran away, back to my weeding, — to anything. If it were really he! I wondered if even they felt an anguish so intense, a joy so intense as my own. It must have lent me greater power than I really have, for I tugged and tugged to relieve my feelings; the burdock came up, root and all, and I sat down rather

suddenly, panting. Peter remonstrated mildly, shaking his head.

"You really shouldn't, Miss!"

"Then why don't you?" I asked. "It was here all the time, and you have a spade."

"I've 'ad no directions, Miss," he said stiffly. "But I don't refer to the weeding; I dessay it is because you are an American and don't understand, but you really shouldn't let disrespectable people in that way. He may be a burglar; he may be robbing the 'ouse at this very minute. But why, if you don't mind me asking, are you crying, Miss?"

"I'm not!" I answered indignantly. "I never cry. Peter, will you lend this man your precious Sunday suit?"

"Never, Miss!" declared Peter, somewhat heated, and mopping his forehead. "A tramp like that!"

"You believe in the brotherhood of man, don't you?"

"Of course I do; certingly I do."

"Madge," I called through the kitchen window, "please start the heater and get water ready for a bath. And please lay out Peter's Sunday suit; he wants to lend it to a brother man."

"Brother man, indeed!" ejaculated Peter, and he went on digging. He is getting a bed ready for next spring's daffodils.

"Peter," I said with some severity, "I want to see if I can respect your social convictions; this is the first chance I have had to test them."

"Yes, Miss," he answered, "but I don't see what that has to do with me Sunday suit."

Not a sound came from the garden; I kept Don with me, — not even he should break that moment. Then I told Peter who had come, how the lovers had lost each other in that mad rush for safety, and how, for days, I had been trying to

find this man, for I was very sure that the right man had come. Peter was spellbound, nor could he dig a stroke while I was talking. Then he began to work, and he worked furiously, as I have not seen him since he came.

"It's quite right, 'm, about the suit," he said presently.

I worked for perhaps an hour, while Peter dug like one inspired. Madge heated water and got towels ready, peering out curiously to see why. A touch of evening chill came into the air; the rooks began to go home, and filmy rose-flushed clouds trailed over the sky at sunset. Finally I shook the dirt off my hands, finding myself very stiff as I tried to stand.

"Peter," I asked, "what shall I do next?"

"I think, 'm, I'd start making a wedding cake," he answered, after due reflection.

"For a futile political theorist, you do have perfectly unexpected moments of insight," I told him.

"Yes, Miss," said Peter.

Silence, except for the rooks, the sound of the brook, and a little wayward flutter of the leaves where the wind was moving. I went to the kitchen and added something un-British and digestible to the supper menu, then walked up and down, wondering why a man probably famished did not appear. Finally I decided that I must investigate and tiptoed my way to the corner of the house. Marie was still sitting in her chair; her knitting was on the ground beside her. The shadow of the grapevine was gone, and her face was alive with light from within and without. The level shafts of sunlight that touched it fell too on the red brick wall behind her, where the espaliered pear tree was etched in dark lines, and all the garden was a soft glow of October gold. The

stranger was sitting on the ground with his head against Marie's knees, and her little shawl over his shoulders, sleeping like a child that had found its way home.

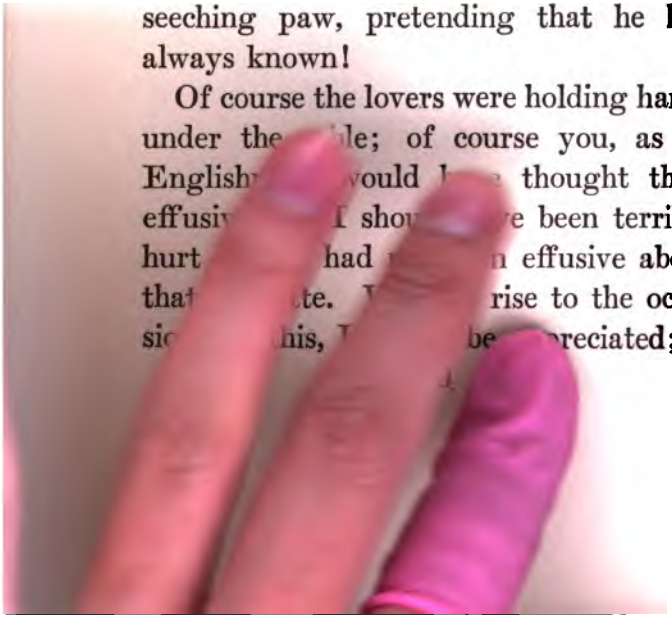
As I crept near, Marie looked up, and a heavenly smile came over her face. She took my hand and held it, kissing it more than once, and she said over and over: "Mademoiselle; Mademoiselle," and again, "Mademoiselle."

We let her lover stay as long as we dared on the brick walk, covering him warmly with steamer rugs. Later we found that he had just reached England and had hardly slept for a week. The sunset faded, and the stars grew bright, and still he leaned his head against Marie's knee and slept the sleep of exhaustion.

Presently we wakened him; there was a great sound of splashing water; Marie ran up-stairs to do her hair over again and came down flushed like a rose, re-

vitalized, alive as I had not dreamed she could be alive, and at last our guest appeared, clean and smiling. He was evidently amused by the odd fit of Peter's clothes, but too tired and too happy to say much. I sped to the kitchen to make the French omelette; Madge cannot do it, — no Briton could; it has to be manipulated in just the right fashion, turned at the exact fraction of a second, and served in just the right way. You should have seen Don, when he found the stranger in your place, apologizing, snuffing daintily, touching him with a friendly and beseeching paw, pretending that he had always known!

Of course the lovers were holding hands under the ...le; of course you, as an English ... would ... thought them effusi... I sho... e been terribly hurt ... had ... n effusive about that ...te. ... rise to the occasi... his, ... be ...reciated; I



had nothing to complain of that night. Tea and toast and jam; a few tears, and much laughter, and a Sultana cake — the very kind that grew in Oxford windows and graced our five o'clock banquets; a Sultana cake calls to my mind the profoundest problems of life and destiny, so many of them we discussed over the crumbs, — this, I am afraid, meant a rather ascetic repast for the young Belgians, but I thought that anything more, with their great draughts of happiness, would be indigestible. Peter took Henri to the Inn and got a room for him. Though he was there more than three weeks, mine host would not let me pay a farthing, — no, indeed! The Belgians are the guests of the English nation, he said, and he was glad to have his chance to shelter one of them.

November 1. War, unceasing war in the trenches, with rumours of a British

naval defeat in South American waters, and little encouraging news save that the Germans have failed to reach Dunkirk and Calais. England's best are dying, your kind, — England's noblest sons rushing to the danger places, foolishly, grandly brave. One can feel throughout the country the great purpose shaping itself to the needs of the moment, as it does slowly but surely in this land. That is the secret of this people: they can rise to a challenge, meet any crisis whatever when it comes; and though I know that unpreparedness has cost them much, they are greater and better than if they had devoted their best energy for five and twenty years to getting ready for war. Enthusiasm kindles under the challenge of disaster; the finest have already answered the call; the less fine make the great refusal. You go, but Peter stays, and Peter's kind all over England stays. . . .

November 5. Peter does not stay! Peter is going to the war! For several days he has been very critical of civilization, very severe upon his country and her rulers; at times he seemed to think himself the only real pillar of Church and State. Some struggle was going on within him; I have learned enough of him to know that if he expresses a feeling, it is one he does not have! For him, as for me, the horror of the present moment has been intensified by coming into contact with those who have actually suffered. All that I could understand of Henri Dupré's account I have translated into English for Peter's benefit, and the sight of the bullet-riddled hat has plunged him in deep thought.

He saw your picture, the picture of you in khaki. Madge, unpermitted, had taken it into the kitchen to polish the frame of oak. Peter looked at it uneasily.

"A friend of yours, Miss?"

"Yes, Peter."

"At the front, 'm?"

"At the front, Peter," I answered. I could not have said anything else, and even if I live to be a hundred, I shall not think of you any other way except as at the front, fighting if need be, carrying messages across the danger zone, with no thought of danger.

It was a great advance in Peter to admit the existence of a front; he has persisted in declaring the war a bit of sensational romance, devised by the House of Lords for their own entertainment. It was a brooding Peter who busied himself with rubbing up the knives, — he has been unusually attentive to Madge since her escapade; his mind seemed to be running on troubles greater than his own.

"Do you know where our army is supposed to be now, 'm?" he asked, when I told him that we had no good news from the seat of war.

*Our* army! We were getting on! I gave him my best information about our hard-pressed line in the west.

"It's astonishing that those Germans are able to fight at all, 'm, when they have once met the British," said Peter gloomily, polishing a huge carving knife as if it were a sword. "Meeting the French, that is different; they are a flighty people and very hexcitable."

"Your knowledge of history needs to be brought up to date, Peter," I ventured. "Anything less flighty than that magnificent people of France at this present moment the world has never seen."

"It must be very difficult, 'm, fighting on the Continent, for one who does not speak the foreign tongues. And I couldn't eat frogs, 'm; I'd almost rather 'ave the Germans as allies; sausages aren't as bad as frogs by 'alf."

Later I heard him muttering to himself.

"If the 'Ouse of Lords is really in trouble," said Peter, fighting the great fight with self, "if the 'Ouse of Lords really needs me — Of course, the throne is more or less a figure'ead, but I shouldn't like to see it fall just now, especially if the henemy is coming. . . . I should like to himpress them as much as possible." It was when he was sweeping the walk that I heard him say: "And I should like to see Bobs once more."

But one day determined Peter's future destiny and his rank as a man and a Briton. Peter had gone to the coast, with Puck and the cart, spending the night at a sister's on the way. He had some business at Yarmouth, he said. I devised some errands for him and encouraged his going. I thought that it would perhaps prove to be his farewell to his sister before going to war.

Those were strange days, the days of Peter's absence, — tense, full of nameless

anxiety. That early-morning feeling of suspense, of expectancy, lasted into the afternoon; and one early morning had brought us the unmistakable sound of guns from the sea. Peter came rattling home in the late afternoon, a pale, distraught Peter, who seemed to have lost several pounds. He came into the garden where I was tying up rosebushes for the winter; at first he seemed unable to speak, but at last gasped out, "Those —— Germans!" and the gasp ended in a little sob. As I watched him, I found myself sharing his trembling indignation.

"German ships, 'm, men-of-war, standing off our coast, bombarding; it has never been attacked before. I saw them with my own eyes; I 'eard them with my own ears!"

The firing, then, had had the significance that we dreaded. It began at about seven o'clock in the morning on November third, terrifying the peaceful folk of

the seacoast town, shell after shell, report after report for nearly half an hour. Peter, who was getting an early start for home, had taken Puck and the cart to a house on the outskirts of the town, where he was getting a bag of very superior fertilizer. Then came the great noise and the splashing; little if any actual damage was done to buildings or to people, yet Peter contended that Puck was actually struck on the shoulder by some fragment of splintering wood or flying stone dislodged by a shell. Those shells may have missed their intended mark, but they went home to the heart of the time-expired man, Peter Snell. He knew at last that there was a war, and I knew — what he himself had not yet realized — that he was going to it.

Peter lacks descriptive powers; I got from him little idea of the actual scene in all the fright and confusion. When he had found that there was nothing he could

do to help, he had sped toward home, intent on carrying out his unavowed purpose. Asking how Puck, now standing with drooping head at the gate, had behaved at the crisis, I got the account that I expected, and, as we petted this veteran of the war and dressed a small hurt on his shoulder, I heard how he, the most antic pony in the British Isles, had held his ground, had jumped only moderately, had endured the crashing and the splashing, standing with his four legs braced in the sand, trembling all over, while Peter, dazed a bit at first, came to his senses.

"And I will say, 'm, that he showed more 'ead than I 'ad myself, for the reins were loose on his back, I 'aving dropped them to put in the bag of fertilizer. 'E never offered to run, 'm!"

Puck, the war veteran, took our praises modestly, making no claim to be recognized as a hero; he helps me understand the British temper, not to say the British

constitution. No paper theories for him! The unwritten law of common sense available when needed is admirably embodied in him. That power of keeping your head while others lose theirs is what wins in the long run, and despite the discouragement of this present moment, I feel confident that the English will win in the end. The Germans plan, theorize, show great forethought, but are lost without a programme. Life does not go by plans and charts; no known precautions can foresee its emergencies. Unless some chemical or electric invention of the Teutons can remove the element of uncertainty from existence, surely victory will go to the people who can meet the unforeseen; pull themselves together and know, without forethought, what to do in an instant's danger. All these meditations passed through my head as Puck shook his mane, making light of his adventure, and trotted away down the street to his

stable with an unmistakable air of "England expects every pony to do his duty."

The country thrills with indignation, surprise, and increasing resolution; the impossible has happened, and these inviolate shores have been desecrated by attack.

Peter is away, Peter in khaki, with something already gone from his laggard step, with firmer and more self-respecting tread, recalling the old training which he was beginning to forget. Surely, because of his experience as a soldier, they will let him go soon to the front. The sympathy and the admiration in the eyes of our fugitives have nerved him, as nothing else has done, for the great adventure. I heard Henri giving him some French lessons, strictly along the line of requests for food and drink; the French will make up in swiftness of understanding what he lacks in pronunciation. His last days with Madge have been funny and tragic too. Her first remark, on hearing of the Yar-

mouth incident, was along the old line of urging him to war.

"Some minds," she remarked firmly, "need shot and shell to open 'em." But I could not help noticing that when he began to talk about going, she stopped talking about it. Her face has been tragically comic as she has watched him, in a Falstaff "He-that-died-o'-Wednesday" mood, packing his belongings. I heard the sound of loud sobbing in the kitchen as she made herself a cup of tea the afternoon he went away. Could it be Madge who was muttering questions as to why the King didn't go to war himself if he wanted war?

November 25. A wedding, actually a wedding, in the little red house, which wakens gladly to its ancient responsibilities! Weddings enough have I seen, but this is the first that I ever managed from start to finish; it was much more my own

than if I had been married myself, for I had to do all the planning, coach the actors, superintend the catering, and do the decorating with my own hands. The only thing I did not attempt was performing the ceremony.

We had such joyous weeks, after the banns were published! Marie, I am sure, quite forgot her sorrow; I quite forgot you, most of the time, — I mean in my upper and superficial mind. Down under, of course, in the vital part of my soul, you are I, I am you: there is no remembering or forgetting, for I am living your life and mine in a fashion profound and strange. We were busy every minute, busy with the outer things of life that ride on the surface of the deep currents, — bobbing up and down in the sunshine.

First, there was Marie's trousseau. She begged me with tears to get her nothing more; but a girl must have clothing, be

she married or single, so we purchased much muslin, — "calico," they call it, oh, horrors! What can one think of a nation that calls cotton flannel "swan's-down calico"? We found a little sewing woman in the village, and she did her inefficient best on an ancient sewing machine. Much of the finishing we had to do ourselves, so afternoons we sat in the garden and stitched. My buttonholes would not call forth commendations from any ladies' journal, but what they lacked in delicacy they made up in strength. Buttonholes for war, I consoled myself, as I saw the barricades that I had erected round the little gashes, are a different matter from buttonholes for peace.

Marie's ready-made travelling suit, for which I sent to London, fitted fairly well; as did the boots for both of them. When they overwhelmed me with thanks, I had to talk very earnestly with them; at least I am growing more fluent, and they never

laugh, only once or twice I have seen the corners of their mouths twitching uncontrollably, and once tears came into Marie's eyes as she tried to keep from laughing. They are exquisitely courteous, and would die rather than be rude. I summoned all my resources from grammar, dictionary, and heroic plays; at last the world has faced an occasion that justifies the grandiloquence of French tragedy.

I told them that we were honouring ourselves in being allowed to care for any members of this stricken, dauntless nation. More than anything that could be done for them had they done for the world; how could we ever repay our debt to this little people with its heroic young King? What I was doing I did, not for them (think of having sufficient French to be able to prevaricate in it already!), but for my country and their country — and for England; it was not a personal but an international matter. They may not have

understood all my syntax, but my general meaning they understood perfectly, and Don helped me very greatly by sitting on his hind legs and offering to shake hands, first with one and then with the other. *He,* at least, understands my academic French!

There had to be a wedding dress; I insisted on a white one; it was only China silk, made with a simplicity which, I presume, outraged Marie's grandmother's traditions. As I explained to her, if she goes back to London to help the authorities with the refugees, while Henri returns to Belgium to enter the army, she could doubtless loan this gown for other weddings, for among the fugitives many — I hoped many — another pair of lovers would perhaps be reunited. At this, her eyes filled with tears, and she uttered not another word of remonstrance; she starts on a quest to find others to wear it.

So she wore the white frock at her wedding, and the house was brave in its bridal array! Yellowing ferns, autumn leaves, and great golden chrysanthemums and white decked the living room; outside the dim red and gold of the autumn woods in hazy distance recalled the ancient manuscripts that you showed us in the sacred recesses of the Bodleian. To think that I should live to see a Roman Catholic priest marrying two young folk by my fireplace! Marie and Henri were quite polite but very determined to be married according to the rites of their own Church, and it was done. His Reverence plainly did not want to officiate at my house, but not in vain have I associated with Puck, choosing him for guide, philosopher, and friend, and obstinacy won. Henri wore a new dark tweed business suit which Peter insisted on giving him; he is a fine-looking man when you see him clothed and in his right mind, the torn hat van-

ished. Both faces have a look of sorrow and of shock that should not be on faces so young, but there is also a look of intense and quiet happiness. Even if they are separated again, they will have had something of the joy of life in these brief hours and days since they found each other.

Our wedding feast was the simplest ever set before mortals, unless possibly our Pilgrim fathers and mothers had a simpler in starvation days in the old colony, with bride cake made perhaps of Indian meal! We had tables in the garden, and a few simple things to eat and drink, centering in that wedding cake upon which Peter had insisted. Had not Madge and I spent a whole morning over it, with its raisins and its currants, its spices and its chopped nuts? "Leave off the frosting, 'm!" Madge had ejaculated in horror. "That would be a heathing thing to do!" When I told her that for

most people nowadays the frosting was rubbed off of life, she looked at me as if she thought me mad. So she does, but harmless mad.

Perhaps the mild November air, which harmonizes all things, — sad, soft and sweet, — helped harmonize the diverse elements at that wedding feast. There were the Vicar and the Roman priest peacefully grazing as one; the Vicaress was affably chatting with mine host and hostess as on equal terms; one of my county ladies was entertaining the little dressmaker who cannot sew. I did my best in inviting them to outrage as many conventions as possible; they submitted to the necessities of the occasion, and still the House of Lords stands, or sits, King George is on his throne, and the kingdom has not fallen.

I hope it never will!

It had been hard to induce the Vicar to come, but I reminded him that our Church

had been a Roman Catholic Church before Queen Elizabeth's day, and that, in the holy ground of the churchyard, Roman Catholic dust was mingled with Church of England dust. How, at this cruel moment in the world's history, the truth cries out that there should be no struggle between Christian and Christian, only between Christian and Pagan! He came; high and low alike nibbled our little cakes and consumed our ices, and drank the simple beverage made of lemons and other ingredients served from a wonderful old blue punch bowl. Ay, we were all allies that day!

So they were married and fêted, and when it was all over, mine host drove them to the railway station, and I followed with Puck and the pony cart, Don sitting beside me, and the gingerbread baby with two of its brothers sitting on the other side. The village windows and doorways were crowded with friendly

faces, for the story of the two re-united lovers had spread far, and many a kindly good-bye was spoken by people who had never met them. I had determined that Puck, who had found Marie, and to whom the happy outcome of the story was due, should have a place of honour at the parting moment, but Marie's last glimpse of him showed him indignantly shaking off the white rosettes that had been fastened to his headstall.

They waved back quite a merry farewell, and then they disappeared, vanishing behind the great cloud of tragedy that hangs so close. I can see only suffering ahead of them. They consented to take a loan from me, not to be repaid until their country is free, and they promised again and again to let me know if they came to want.

It is lonely to-night, belovèd, under my roof.

## THE WORN DOORSTEP

December 27. Winter is gentler here than at home, bringing at times enfolding grey mist and hours of rain; yet we have had many days of clear and sunny cold, and snow has fallen on the roof of the little red house. My royal family of fowls lives a subdued but happy life in the house of Peter's making; Puck has taken up his residence at the Inn, for cold has come, and Peter is far away. The English robin stays with us evidently throughout the winter; the rooks have not deserted; and we are visited daily by silver-winged gulls which come all the way from the sea for the food we put out.

My home with the little "h" is seldom empty; for two of these winter weeks we had here two small Belgian boys, eight and ten years old, very red of cheek and black of hair, and very much boy. What a two weeks! The Atom immediately retreated to the loft over the kitchen, coming down only for its meals. It found

a warm corner by the chimney where it cuddled in safety.

Don clung close to my side; he would not make friends. His dictum was that he would associate with either the aristocracy or the peasantry, but that the lower middle class he would not tolerate. Those boys, who had tried to tie a tin can to his tail, *his* tail, that organ of fine expressiveness, equal to English prose style at its best, were not gentlemen, and he would have nothing to do with them.

I was glad to see that the suffering of the past weeks had not ruined their young lives, but I admit a failure in managing my guests. Even Madge could do nothing with them, though her hand is heavy; I do not approve of corporal punishment, but life in theory and life in practice seem amazingly different at times, and I looked the other way. They demanded the tail feathers of Hengist and Horsa for

their play of American Indian, and I discovered as I defeated their purpose that they thought they were living with an Indian lady and were trying to garb themselves appropriately. I rose to the challenge as best I could; have I not vowed, whatever happens, never to be an "old maid"? I romped with them in the meadow, played "tag," and helped them make boats to sail on the stream, but I had no control over them. Puck was the only perfectly successful disciplinarian, and whenever they tried to climb on his back, or ride by clinging to his tail, his quick little hind heels — fortunately only his fore feet are shod — accomplished what neither coaxing, admonition, nor enforced fasting could accomplish. They were not really bad, only dwelling in that Stone Age through which so many men-children pass. A neighbouring farmer and his wife wanted to adopt them, and I thankfully let them go, calling in the village carpen-

ter to help Madge and me make the necessary repairs.

There was peace, we are told, for a few hours on Christmas day in the trenches; but Christmas should mean lasting peace! The attack, less than two weeks ago, on our undefended coast towns, Hartlepool, Scarborough, Whitby, has enkindled as nothing else has done the dull glow of English wrath. The recruiting goes more swiftly; a number of young men have gone from our village in the last few days; the blacksmith's shop is closed, and the forge fire is out, — he has gone to work in a munition factory. We who stay are knitting for the trenches and sewing for the hospitals; I never dreamed that I should live to know such human anguish and human want, — yet it is good to learn that one need not stand alone, bearing the pain of life in solitude. I have joined every possible relief association and have pledged almost my uttermost penny. We

are even selling eggs for the hospital funds; spite of cold weather, the Matildas, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne, and Queen Victoria are rising magnificently to the crisis. The London people are using the house occasionally as a temporary shelter for one or two people at a time before permanent places are found for them. The Inn also serves for this, and mine hostess and I have many a conference; fortunately, in the haste and confusion, some of the bric-a-brac is getting broken; one alabaster vase and one glass case covering artificial flowers have disappeared.

Madge has amused me by finding a way to express, in rather original fashion, her deepening sympathy with humankind. A courting is going on in our kitchen; every Friday night the lovers come, she from the village, he from a farm lying beyond the Hall; and every Friday night Madge either goes to bed early, or steps

out to see her friends. The girl is a country lass rather ill-treated by a mistress who shall be nameless; she has no place to receive her lover, save the stone wall of the bridge across the stream. She steals here in the dusk on her one free evening; why not? The young man is a perfectly suitable wooer, and they are safer in my kitchen than out in the cold. Yet I admit that I feel a bit guilty when I very formally return the very formal greeting of the unconscious mistress.

Just now, no one is staying with us, and there is blessed quiet. Through the silences in the little house, old moods, old laughter, old half-merry tears come back; you blend with all my days. Sometimes I feel, not as at first, that this is the end of things for me, but as if it were a little truce of God while I am waiting. To-day I found my first grey hairs; there were two, one on each temple; have you any to match them, I wonder? Ah, I keep for-

getting, forgetting; keep thinking of you as still alive and suffering in this war. Remembering, I envy you; the many years ahead look formidable.

Do you remember the day we took our fifteen-mile walk from Oxford in May, and sat to rest on the flat grey stones in an old, old village churchyard, with a tangle of wild vines at our feet, and primroses and violets blossoming near, — do you remember that we talked of immortality and decided that when one died it was death, that having lived was enough? At least you did; I always had "ma doots o' ma doots." I think it was just May that made us feel that way, — the fragrances, the bird songs, the sun-flecked clouds over the Cumnor Hills; you too were far more influenced by things outside the world of pure thought than you ever knew, my philosopher; have I not seen you mistaking a sunbeam for an optimistic syllogism? We doubted, dear, but

we were wrong; you do not die; you are more intensely alive than ever.

I am stealing a little time to try to do a portrait of you, though it is long since I have had a brush in my hand; you know that I was something but not much of an artist. What were the half-gifts meant for, I wonder, all the aspiration that goes into them, the denied hope? I used to suffer because I could not create the things I saw and dreamed, but that kind of suffering has vanished utterly, — life flows out in so many ways. There's a bit of attic with a north light near the Atom's lair that I have fitted up as a studio, and I have unpacked there my easel and canvases. To-day I shut myself up and began my portrait of you, merely sketching, for the outlines blurred. I had a curious experience. So clear is my inner vision of you that it blinded my eyes, and that which was in my mind a perfect picture would prove, if I left the room and came

back to look at it afresh, a set of meaningless lines.

December 30. For three days I tried and tried in vain; then came sudden success, for your very mouth half smiled at me from the canvas where I had been putting random strokes. As I work, I feel that I never before really knew you; deeper understanding comes to me of your doubts, your resolutions, your long growth, and what you are. Little things long forgotten come drifting back, concerning your boyhood in the old rectory, the hard awakening of an English public school. Chance remarks that you made carelessly long ago waken in memory and reveal you to me anew. The first time I realized the depth of feeling within you was when I caught a glimpse of you listening to music at a concert in the Sheldonian theatre; once, at least, your overguarded face betrayed the real you. I

learned to know your quiet sympathy, your concealed sensitive understanding of the needs of humankind, and to comprehend your difficulty in showing it, making it available. You built up the excluding barrier of an Englishman's expression between you and the world; only animals and children dared break through. I can see them yet rubbing their fuzzy heads against you, from the big Angora at Greyfriars, to little Lady Matilda at Witton Hall.

December 31. I cannot finish this portrait, for the eyes baffle me, and each time I try you seem to be looking at me appealingly, as if you wanted me to express something that I but dimly see. My present knowledge of you seems in some strange way to outstrip your remembered face. My sketch — for I shall leave it a mere sketch — suggests all your suffering and all my sorrow, and yet not all is

said. What knowledge have you now that I do not share? Tell it very gently in the quiet, and I shall know; am I not always listening? I am hungry for your wisdom of death.

January 12, 1915. Deepening cold drives us all closer to the hearth; perhaps it is only in winter that one gets the full flavour of home. Don curls up by the fire with me, or takes glorious cross-country walks. The little old gingerbread woman of the lych gate has disappeared; I half suspect her of crawling temporarily into one of the graves to keep warm. In snug farmyards, by great sunny ricks of hay, the cattle of the countryside shelter themselves contentedly. Now, even more than in summer, this land seems home from end to end; in every nook and corner is something of the appeal of the fireside; no other country so suggests from shore to shore one great threshold and hearth. Its

churchyards, with their dead softly tucked in, the comforting grass above; its low-roofed villages; its individual homes in their great loveliness wear one expression.

There are wonderful sunsets over the brown earth or white snow. This is that England on whose domain the sun never sets, yet it sets most exquisitely day by day, did they but know.

For a week we had with us a little nun, who prayed and prayed, looking about her with big, frightened eyes. Luckily, my acquaintance with His Reverence, who officiated at Marie's wedding, solved the problem, and she went gladly to the shelter of a convent roof. Then for a few days we cared for an old, old man, who swore and swore, softly, constantly, but with an air of question, as if no oaths could quite meet the need of the present moment. It was most incongruous, for he was very evidently a gentleman, and he

very evidently thought that he was expressing himself politely, even if inadequately. My knowledge of the French language was greatly extended, but this new vocabulary is, alas! as unavailable for the uses of ordinary life as that which I learned from Corneille! Our fugitive was a most pathetic old creature whose mind had been somewhat unsettled by suffering and exile. Fortunately a relative of his was discovered, a prosperous Belgian merchant living in the outskirts of London, and my guest bade me a profane but grateful farewell. A few days' care seems but little to offer these flitting guests on their sorrowful journey, but it is a great relief to me to do even this little, and as each one goes, I feel like saying "Thank you!" as the well-trained British waiter says when you deign to take something from the offered plate.

We really need Peter's advice, — think of that: Peter's advice, which I have

scorned to take! In our zeal we became victims of one bit of imposture, which, however, did not involve us in irretrievable loss, — only spoons! Two dark-skinned folk presented themselves one cold, wintry day when all the desolation of the earth seemed dripping down in icy rain. They asked for food, telling us that they were Belgian refugees in need of help; evidently the habits of this household have been rumoured abroad. We were a bit suspicious, but resolved to err upon the right side. While Madge was cooking and I had gone to order fresh supplies, they decamped with my spoons and my purse, luckily a very lean purse. Don had simply absented himself; he no longer trusts his instincts, finding himself in a world whose standards he does not comprehend. The old order changes, giving place to new; old caste distinctions are ignored, and he has not as yet had time to learn new mental habits. He has found

for himself a little agnostic den in a corner behind the kitchen range, and he goes there when he cannot make up his mind. When we discovered our loss and began our search, he came out wagging his tail with a self-congratulatory air to say, "I told you so!" But he had not told us so; he had only deserted us when we needed him most. Our light-fingered guests have been found in a gypsy tribe passing through to the north, but my spoons have not been found. Must I lap my supper from a saucer with Don and the Atom?

January 19. As I sit by the fire and toast my toes in my few minutes of blessed idleness, I cannot help living over old days and hours, and I see again the dusk of that evening when you and your family escorted me to Hinksey to hear the nightingales; the sunshine of that afternoon when you and I searched in vain the meadows beyond Iffley for pink-tipped

English daisies. Often I find myself again arguing things out with you, even getting a bit angry now and then, forgetting that you cannot answer. Many and many a dispute we had, many and many a disagreement, with the invariable outcome of deeper understanding.

Sometimes the unshared jests hurt most of all; what has become of your humour, dear, that rare, dry humour that betrayed itself most plainly in your eyes? When first I knew you, I thought that you had no sense of humour; I soon found that it was deeper than my own, because of your insight into the irony of the human predicament. At times it touched the tragic. I learned to understand your quiet enjoyment in watching people, your wordless jests, and the silent drollery of your half smile. How you loved to tease me about the foibles of my countrymen.

"No other people," you would say, "would come dashing into the courtyard

of a French hotel, with flags flying from the carriage, singing their national hymn at the top of their voices; no other people would motor swiftly to the entrance of a French cathedral, crying out: 'You do the inside, and we'll do the outside, and it won't take us more than five minutes!' And there is always the pleasing memory of the lady from Montana who deplored the inadequacy of the Louvre because the pictures couldn't compare with the exhibition that they had had in the winter at Wilkins Bluff. But of course this represents a class of Americans that you would not know."

That was the day we had tea by the river; I was hot with helping you get the boat past the lock, hot with making the tea, and I grew hotter still.

"I admit that we are vulgar, and loud-voiced, and ostentatious," I told you; "but we aren't selfish, and we aren't insolent. On the contrary, we are usually

quixotically good-natured and generous. We do not look in blank surprise as the British do if any one questions their right to be served before all other people with the choicest of everything. You have little idea of what we suffer who meet many of the travelling English of to-day, with their quiet and total selfishness in securing and sitting upon all that is best. Of course, this represents a class of the English that you would not know." This you forgave, but you never quite forgave, I fear, my wicked suggestion that the moat about the Bishop's palace was preserved in order to keep out the poor and needy.

But the things about which we quarrelled were only surface things; I knew and loved my England more than I ever admitted to you; and you, for all your criticism of my countrymen (much of it was abundantly justified), had divined the spirit of idealism in our democracy. The

development of the individual in righteous freedom for you, as for us, was the great hope of the world. Under all the crudeness of America, under the arrogance of England, lives, and has lived from earliest days, a something great and fine, shared by republican France, — a passion for liberty. The little things do not matter if the great convictions at the heart of nations are akin; have not people of late cared too much about little things? If our two peoples become aware of the greatness of their common destiny, will they not stop fussing about the American accent and English incivility? As I walk alone nowadays, I try to drive this haunting, insistent world-suffering from my mind by dreams of a great future wherein your country and mine go hand in hand, helping secure for all time liberty for the human race.

Each has something to contribute that the other lacks. I really think that we,

in our sense of the dignity of the individual man, in willingness to forego shades and differences of taste for the sake of something greater, have outgrown you. You, with your keen insight, had divined the need of democracy, had accepted it in theory, but found the inevitable consequences hard to accept. Nothing is more agreeable than good taste; perhaps there are things more profoundly important. Dare I say that I think we have outstripped you in generosity of act and of thought?

But you are greater than we, and your life runs in deeper channels than our own, in that you keep faith with the past, refusing to let the hard-won spiritual achievement of the race be swept away by the externalism of the present. To you, as to no other people, we look to save the world from the terrible material forces, without conscience, without insight, which threaten to dominate the whole of life.

You who refuse to give up fine standards of an elder day are the influence that we of America greatly need, for in matters intellectual, we are all too prone to be led, and have been too much cowed by this later Germany — who forgets.

February 1. We are living on, as best we may, through cold and thaw and cold again. The horror of that January night, when human beings and birds wakened, with fear dropping from the sky, when innocent women and children were killed by bombs from German Zeppelins, lingers and grows deeper. The tension was greatest for those who could not hear what the birds heard, but listened to the great outcry of blackbirds, pheasants, and other winged things, to the loud cawing of the rooks, and wondered and waited in nameless anguish. There seems to be no refuge in earth or sky or sea. Can this world of shot and shell and conquering

chemicals be that world that was so beautiful, and that suddenly seemed so strangely *safe* when you came into my life?

March 10. Such days of excitement and of strain! My little house has performed its supreme service, — has sheltered a body, while the soul was going out.

It began three days ago; I was walking down the village street with Don at my heels, when I noticed a large touring car at the Inn, with a group of people very much excited, gesticulating and talking with a vehemence that usually means Latin blood. Mine hostess of the Inn was running to and from the car with bottles and flannel cloths; turpentine on warm flannel is her cure for every human ailment. Then I saw in the car an old, old lady — quite ill, evidently — leaning heavily on the shoulder of a younger woman. I shall not soon forget the look

of that grey-white face under the snow-white hair and black widow's bonnet, set in a group of strange faces, among which I remember one of a little boy, watching breathlessly with his mouth wide open, and a smaller girl, staring apathetically with her eyes full of tears that looked as if they had long been there. I did not need to be told that this oddly-assorted set of people were refugees. I had seen too many utter strangers, from diverse surroundings, hastily gathered together, clad in velvet, clad in rags, to share one suffering.

I found that they were being taken from London, where they had been cared for for many weeks, to different destinations in the northern counties, but the man in charge had evidently lost his way and was making an unnecessary detour toward the coast. He could not speak their language, nor they his, and he seemed entirely at a loss in this dilemma.

Oh, the loneliness, and the desolation, and the bitter shame of it all!

"The old lady's took ill, of a sudden, 'm," said the landlady, stopping her little trot near me.

I asked the younger woman, whose face was very kindly, if this was her mother, but she shook her head.

"I don't know who she is; I never saw her until we started."

Then I begged and pleaded; the chauffeur looked greatly relieved, and so did mine hostess, though she remonstrated that it would be quite too much for me.

"Are you sure, Miss, that you want her? We don't know what it is; it may be contagious."

"I don't care what it is!" I said so suddenly that Don barked out; there was a little feeling of joy within me at the thought that there might be danger; it is hard to be shut out from the great danger that circles the world.

So the big touring car was turned about, with much puffing and panting; my little iron gate was opened wide to let two men carry the poor old creature to my guest room, and I sent the others on, with such comforts as I could supply. The small boy went nibbling a cookie, the little girl with hers in her hand, too dazed to eat it. Haven't you ever seen a frightened little bird holding something in its mouth, not daring to swallow?

The village doctor and Madge and I worked for hours over the fugitive. She only looked at us with eyes that had in them all the weariness of the world since the dawn of time. There was evidently no malady; actual physical pain did not seem to be there; only overwhelming mental pain or shock that means destruction of the very forces of life. She was not unconscious, nor was she fully conscious of what was going on around her. The comfort of warm water on her body,

the comfort of soothing drink she hardly realized, nor could she swallow, except with great difficulty and reluctance. Just once she stretched herself out at full length with a look of relief, and lay motionless.

I shall never know what weary ways she had trodden in her escape from the swift ruin of war, nor how in her tottering age she had escaped at all. She seemed to be one who, her life long, had walked the same peaceful paths over and over, as her forefathers had done before. Was she one of those who, driven from home and fireside, had lain down in the dust of the road, longing to die? Contagious! Heartbreak does seem contagious in these days; who shall escape? Who can wish to, when other hearts break?

Life can never bring me anything so strange, perhaps it can never bring me anything so wonderful, as this silent companionship with a soul that had almost

passed. She did not understand the words I used, but she did understand that we were trying to help her; though her lips were still, her eyes followed us, — eyes full of knowledge that can not come before the last. She did not try to thank us, dwelling in some world of instinctive understanding, making one feel that the long ages of much speaking were folly. She had let go of all tangible things and was no longer aware of time or circumstance; there was no look of fear in her eyes, no look of sorrow; she was done with earth and with feeling, having neither reproaches nor regrets. She had gone beyond pain, beyond joy, beyond those simple human affections that linger to the last, to some region of ultimate peace, or of quiet beyond peace.

The falling of March rain upon the roof; sunshine, with the notes of the returning birds; the cawing of the rooks, and the soft ripple of the brook — even

Madge was subdued by the majesty of it all and forgot to rail at the Kaiser, or to storm in misplaced aspirates at the Germans. A world beyond hate was with us, where it was good to be.

The end was hardly different from the days that went before; there was no motion, no outburst, only a quiet ceasing of that which had hardly been breathing. Our departing guest folded her wrinkled hands upon her breast herself, as if to save us trouble, and so I found her. Who was she? Who belonged to her? Where are the children and grandchildren who should have been gathered about her bed?

The doctor and the village nurse took charge of her; when she was ready for burial, more quiet than earth itself, — one never knows quiet until one sees it so, — I put roses beside her; one of the county ladies keeps me supplied from her conservatory. Yet I hesitated; it seemed wrong to recall in this presence any mere

tangible and visible beauty, or aught from the world of things. The lovely contours and outlines, the perfume of the roses reproached me, as if I were pursuing her to bring her back to mere self, hampering her escape. With her we seemed to be swept away into some great consciousness that meant relief from individual sorrow, — sharing her rest, a repose so deep that it rested us for all the days to come.

Madge mourned over her as if it were her own mother, — I hardly know why: could it have been merely the three days of trying to care for her? Or was she touched, in some depth of her nature never reached before, by the grandeur of that loneliness?

There was a brief service in the little church on the hill, a sound of song, of praying; but nothing in the burial service could quite express the pathos of that moment when we buried some one's mother, not even knowing her name. We left her

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in the churchyard, within hearing of the stream, where deep shadows fall on grave after grave. This cold winter grass which grows above the other graves will soon, with the quickening of spring, cover hers also; already it is freshening, and crocuses peep out here and there.

There is no name to put on a stone at her head. It is perhaps at best folly to mark the resting-places of the dead, yet I had a feeling that no token of respect must be lacking, and I begged that an old grey tombstone, standing by the churchyard wall, a stone so old that all that was carved on it has been worn away, might be placed at her head. It has told the passing of one human soul, and shall tell that of another; in its grey, fine-worn beauty it symbolizes the vast impersonality of the end.

I come here now even oftener than I used. Surely death has never appeared so gentle, so much a member of the fam-

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I do not care what Mr. Asquith has done wrong; what Mr. Joseph Chamberlain did wrong; what King George the Third and all the Georges have done or failed to do: I trust this people as I trust no other. Guilty of sins and blunders they may be and are, but the blunder is followed by the honest effort to find again and do the right; you come down always to a groundwork of character, sincerity, integrity. England has been in a way the conscience of the world. What other race-name is a word to conjure with? All over the earth where confusion comes, it is whispered: "The troubles are dying

Oh, the loneliness, and the desolation, and the bitter shame of it all!

"The old lady's took ill, of a sudden, 'm," said the landlady, stopping her little trot near me.

I asked the younger woman, whose face was very kindly, if this was her mother, but she shook her head.

"I don't know who she is; I never saw her until we started."

Then I begged and pleaded; the chauffeur looked greatly relieved, and so did mine hostess, though she remonstrated that it would be quite too much for me.

"Are you sure, Miss, that you want her? We don't know what it is; it may be contagious."

"I don't care what it is!" I said so suddenly that Don barked out; there was a little feeling of joy within me at the thought that there might be danger; it is hard to be shut out from the great danger that circles the world.

So the big touring car was turned about, with much puffing and panting; my little iron gate was opened wide to let two men carry the poor old creature to my guest room, and I sent the others on, with such comforts as I could supply. The small boy went nibbling a cookie, the little girl with hers in her hand, too dazed to eat it. Haven't you ever seen a frightened little bird holding something in its mouth, not daring to swallow?

The village doctor and Madge and I worked for hours over the fugitive. She only looked at us with eyes that had in them all the weariness of the world since the dawn of time. There was evidently no malady; actual physical pain did not seem to be there; only overwhelming mental pain or shock that means destruction of the very forces of life. She was not unconscious, nor was she fully conscious of what was going on around her. The comfort of warm water on her body,

the comfort of soothing drink she hardly realized, nor could she swallow, except with great difficulty and reluctance. Just once she stretched herself out at full length with a look of relief, and lay motionless.

I shall never know what weary ways she had trodden in her escape from the swift ruin of war, nor how in her tottering age she had escaped at all. She seemed to be one who, her life long, had walked the same peaceful paths over and over, as her forefathers had done before. Was she one of those who, driven from home and fireside, had lain down in the dust of the road, longing to die? Contagious! Heartbreak does seem contagious in these days; who shall escape? Who can wish to, when other hearts break?

Life can never bring me anything so strange, perhaps it can never bring me anything so wonderful, as this silent companionship with a soul that had almost

passed. She did not understand the words I used, but she did understand that we were trying to help her; though her lips were still, her eyes followed us, — eyes full of knowledge that can not come before the last. She did not try to thank us, dwelling in some world of instinctive understanding, making one feel that the long ages of much speaking were folly. She had let go of all tangible things and was no longer aware of time or circumstance; there was no look of fear in her eyes, no look of sorrow; she was done with earth and with feeling, having neither reproaches nor regrets. She had gone beyond pain, beyond joy, beyond those simple human affections that linger to the last, to some region of ultimate peace, or of quiet beyond peace.

The falling of March rain upon the roof; sunshine, with the notes of the returning birds; the cawing of the rooks, and the soft ripple of the brook — even

Madge was subdued by the majesty of it all and forgot to rail at the Kaiser, or to storm in misplaced aspirates at the Germans. A world beyond hate was with us, where it was good to be.

The end was hardly different from the days that went before; there was no motion, no outburst, only a quiet ceasing of that which had hardly been breathing. Our departing guest folded her wrinkled hands upon her breast herself, as if to save us trouble, and so I found her. Who was she? Who belonged to her? Where are the children and grandchildren who should have been gathered about her bed?

The doctor and the village nurse took charge of her; when she was ready for burial, more quiet than earth itself, — one never knows quiet until one sees it so, — I put roses beside her; one of the county ladies keeps me supplied from her conservatory. Yet I hesitated; it seemed wrong to recall in this presence any mere

tangible and visible beauty, or aught from the world of things. The lovely contours and outlines, the perfume of the roses reproached me, as if I were pursuing her to bring her back to mere self, hampering her escape. With her we seemed to be swept away into some great consciousness that meant relief from individual sorrow, — sharing her rest, a repose so deep that it rested us for all the days to come.

Madge mourned over her as if it were her own mother, — I hardly know why: could it have been merely the three days of trying to care for her? Or was she touched, in some depth of her nature never reached before, by the grandeur of that loneliness?

There was a brief service in the little church on the hill, a sound of song, of praying; but nothing in the burial service could quite express the pathos of that moment when we buried some one's mother, not even knowing her name. We left her

in the churchyard, within hearing of the stream, where deep shadows fall on grave after grave. This cold winter grass which grows above the other graves will soon, with the quickening of spring, cover hers also; already it is freshening, and crocuses peep out here and there.

There is no name to put on a stone at her head. It is perhaps at best folly to mark the resting-places of the dead, yet I had a feeling that no token of respect must be lacking, and I begged that an old grey tombstone, standing by the churchyard wall, a stone so old that all that was carved on it has been worn away, might be placed at her head. It has told the passing of one human soul, and shall tell that of another; in its grey, fine-worn beauty it symbolizes the vast impersonality of the end.

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play, — these watchwords of England are the hope of the human race. What other land could rule many alien peoples and make them so proudly content? As England has kept faith with the past, she has, barring some great mistakes, kept faith with humanity. The recent magnificent bravery of the Canadians in the battles with flaming gas only intensifies the splendour of the voluntary tribute of England's colonies to England in distress. Earth has not seen the like of this empire resting on the will of man; from the four quarters of the globe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, they come sailing swiftly home, counting it great gain to die for that for which she stands. It means that at the heart of England is something too precious to lose, a faith in the working possibility of human freedom. Crude races, races old and outworn, need to learn at her feet the practical way of making good this immemorial hope of the

race. Under her rule, the individual has his chance of self-government; if he fails to take it, falling into the net of sloth and old habit as he often does in England, the fault is his own. His individual conscience is left him; he is not compelled to become a soulless cog in a gigantic conscienceless mechanism.

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down; the English are drawing near." And in the councils of the world, her voice has been the great arbiter of right and wrong.

No one here now can doubt that England is going through that great anguish wherein the soul of a people is re-born. The unity, the calm, the quickening determination are part of a great spring-time that will lead, God grant, to harvest days of peace. There is slow knitting up of the sinews of war; more and more her sons respond to the call which still leaves them free to choose; old England is getting ready as ever, resolved, incredulous of defeat; the spring knows it; the rooks know it, busy in their elm tree parliament. The great sorrow and the great endeavour have turned the very soil of the country into holy ground. Among my bonfires of spring, — for I like to keep that old, religious rite of purification, — I burned half a dozen volumes of recent English

fiction, decadent, erotic; a volume or two of flippant and sensational criticism; and one of affected futurist poetry, or some brand like unto it. They belong to the England whose follies and foibles are being burned in a great fire of affliction; they are not worthy of this great England that is emerging from the flame.

As I write, the tinkle of the English sheep bells from afar comes like the very sound of peace.

February, with the vanishing of the icicles, brought snowdrops and crocuses. All kinds of growing things of which I had not dreamed came peeping up in this old garden: crocuses, purple and gold, grow in a little clump where the wind just fails to reach them; royal daffodils nod and sway, or stand erect and golden, those from new planting outshining the rest. In March the violets were out, and primroses followed; the pony's meadow is full of them, deep in the grass; and these are

only a part of the lovely procession of flowers, — bluebells, anemones, and unnumbered others.

To me it seemed that the birds came very early, — birds that are strangers to me, birds that I know; and we were glad once more in the companionship of wings. I was thankful when the swallows came, circling, flying high, flying low; wrens, old friends of mine, are building under my porch roof; a merry little blue tit, a friend quite new, disports himself among the leaves. I have heard the cuckoo calling, calling beyond the stream; you were the first to tell me that this was the cuckoo's note. English larks are very near neighbours; every day I can hear them singing at "heaven's gate."

We have all been as busy as bees since the melting of the snow, humans and animals alike. Back with the first suggestion of warmer sunshine Hengist and Horsa began to crow; alas for William

the Conqueror, who will never crow again! and my many queens of the hen-yard began to lay and cackle as boastfully as in times of peace. Every living thing came crawling out of hole and hiding-place and took up its task; the little gingerbread woman came back to the lych gate to sit in the sun; Puck, once more one of the family, as he grazes beyond the stream, trotted merrily to Shepperton again and again to bring seeds and young plants, for I intend to have a garden that will astonish Peter when Peter comes back from the war. It seems to me that there is an added touch of determination in the pony's gait and in the toss of his shaggy head since he became a hero of the war, an upholder of the kingdom, a defender of the faith.

Madge is the busiest of all living things and will not be idle for a moment for fear of "thinking long." Never was there such a be-scrubbed, be-polished,

shining house as the little red house! I tremble for my own face when I see her with the soap and sand, the brass polish, the silver polish, the long-handled mop, and the wooden pail. It is Madge with a changed face, with deepening lines between the eyes, a worrying, anxious Madge, who steals the newspaper and reads it in the kitchen before she brings it to me. I cannot help noticing that she talks less and less of the glory of England and more and more about Peter. Laconic post cards with peculiar spelling tell us that Peter is alive and well in the trenches. Peter, because of his old experience as soldier, was allowed to go speedily to the front, and is now at close quarters with the enemy.

In earliest April, the little red house sheltered the grand adventure, the greatest adventure, for death seems safe and easy by the side of the great adventure of being born. I had a whole family quar-

tered here, father, mother, and two small winsome children, boy and girl; we tucked them away where we could. And a wee man-child came into the world during their stay here, with much pomp and circumstance and attendance of mine hostess from the Inn, and of the village doctor, whose lot in life has evidently been to stand helpless and aghast, watching mortals who will venture into a world which seems to be no safe place for them. If it had rested with him, small Jean would have had no chance at all; but Madge and mine hostess came to the rescue, and all went well, on to that first little weird lonely cry.

It was little bigger than the Atom. It slept, during all its first days, a troubled, puckered sleep. Don worshipped it, and whenever it cried, gave an anxious whine or a sharp short bark. In the Atom's loft I unearthed a prehistoric cradle that may have been left by the Danes or the Sax-

ons. Of course I know that rocking is most unhygienic, but I thought that if this little, frightened fugitive mother found any comfort in rocking her baby by the fireside, rock it she should. It isn't, I believe, supposed to injure anything except the brain, and the brain counts for so little nowadays in the contemporary ideal of development that I am sure small Jean will have enough left to play his part in the civilization of the future. He had, I noticed, square and sturdy little fists, and he may be some day one of the many who will fight for England, when England's guests defend the door so generously opened to shelter them. The Atom insisted upon sharing the cradle; why not? It had discovered the cradle in the first place and had a certain right to it. So it curled up in a corner, and Jean gurgled and grew fat and rosy in its companionship. It was a joy to have a real baby in the house while the birds were building,

tangible and visible beauty, or aught from the world of things. The lovely contours and outlines, the perfume of the roses reproached me, as if I were pursuing her to bring her back to mere self, hampering her escape. With her we seemed to be swept away into some great consciousness that meant relief from individual sorrow, — sharing her rest, a repose so deep that it rested us for all the days to come.

Madge mourned over her as if it were her own mother, — I hardly know why: could it have been merely the three days of trying to care for her? Or was she touched, in some depth of her nature never reached before, by the grandeur of that loneliness?

There was a brief service in the little church on the hill, a sound of song, of praying; but nothing in the burial service could quite express the pathos of that moment when we buried some one's mother, not even knowing her name. We left her

streams among the grasses. Such a world of beauty, and a world of sorrow! Petals of apple blossom drift even through the open doorway, and everywhere is the murmur of the little wind among the leaves. I sit in my garden, under my apple trees, or walk where the sunshine filters down, clear and still, through the lime trees in the lane, thinking of many things. Close by the stream, at my garden's edge, grow palest purple irises, and at times they seem spirit lilies, delicate as light, growing beside you in your far place.

A few days ago Don dug one of your books out of the case, — he loves to touch them with his faithful paw. It was Dante's *Paradiso* and as it fell open I saw that you had marked certain words with my name: "dolce guida e cara," "sweet guide and dear." That was too beautiful a thing to say of a mere mortal woman.

I find myself thinking consciously less

about you as the days go on; a touch in the darkness, a gleam across the stars, a whisper by the river, — so you come back to me; but the different things we said and did do not return with quite such sharp distinctness and sharp pain. Yet I exist more and more in you, living your life and mine too, spirit to spirit.

Loneliness seems forever impossible since you went out and left the gate ajar, and all the world came in, and all its sorrows. The griefs that enter, in some strange way solace my own, and this increasing sense of the anguish of the world is lightened and lifted by sharing it with other folk. It is good to feel so passionately and so utterly a part of all that lives and throbs and suffers. Though the life that goes on in the little red house must inevitably lack something of the human warmth and joy that we should have known together, more life and greater enters, I think, than would have been ours

if our old dream of happiness had come true. One can bear whatever happens, so long as it makes one understand.

I started out in loneliness to tell my story, to you and to myself, for comfort in the long silences, and lo! I have no story; I do not seem to be merely I; I have gone out of myself and cannot find my way back. In this relieving greatness is, perhaps, dim foreknowledge of what is to come. I have nothing left to ask of life, no demands to make: a little service, work, and sleep, — and then?

June 15. Peter, can it be Peter, with that expression upon his face? He is really here, and a transfiguring look of suffering has worn away forever a something of earth and of stubbornness, — a Peter who seems to have gained greatly in strength and in stature, although one arm is gone, and an empty sleeve hangs by his side. If I had known how to

salute I should have saluted Peter when I saw him home from the war; mentally I do it whenever I see him working with his one poor hand in my garden beds. One of the first things he said to me when he came home was that he was going to Shepperton to try to get work that a one-armed man could do, selling papers or something of the kind. But Peter, who has faced the enemy and the poisonous gases, flinched before my countenance when I heard this. Peter knows now that the little red house and the garden can never get on without him.

It is odd to see the animals with him; Don cannot be attentive enough, but you would expect a dog to understand. Puck is a wonder, standing as meekly as a lamb to let himself be harnessed by a one-armed man, though he used to dance an ancient British war-dance as the straps went on. The old racial love of fair fighting shines out in him; man to man it used to be, or

man to pony, when both were able-bodied, but he will take no advantage of a handicap. He seldom shies now, even at a feather or a floating leaf, but he watches constantly in every direction, waiting for some great danger in which he can comport himself with perfect self-control for the sake of a one-armed man; defying the whole modern era to invent a mechanism that can frighten him. I should like an equestrian statue of Puck *not* shying at a Zeppelin!

Madge is pathetic; she has lost her old moorings of prejudice and conviction and sails in an uncharted sea of life. Church and State are to her only a shade less reprehensible than the Germans, since Peter came home without an arm. While Peter, completely changed, and loyal to the government, for the country he has served so well is his country indeed, sits with her on the bench by the kitchen door in the twilight, full of affectionate talk of

"Kitchener" and "Bobs" — his grief over Lord Roberts' death was both sincere and personal — Madge mutters fiercely against the 'Ouse of Lords for its selfishness and its incompetence. If women ruled, all would be different! Her condemnation of the government would suggest that she is in a fair way to become both an anarchist and a suffragette. She never would have let Peter go a step to war if she had supposed that he would be wounded.

Peter came home, not with a Victoria Cross, but with an Iron Cross, and I can never tell whether he is joking or in earnest when he explains his possession of it. When I asked him how he got it, he replied: "I bestowed it upon meself, Miss." It seems that he had taken it from a German with whom he had fought in a terrible bayonet charge.

"He was a man, he was," Peter says admiringly. "If I got the better of the

man who had earned it, it stands to reason that I'm a better man than him and fit to wear it." So Peter wears his Iron Cross, to the wonder and admiration of the farmers baiting their horses at the Inn, the blacksmith's eleven children, and the inhabitants in general of our village. How much he tells those eager listeners of the horrors he has seen I do not know, but sometimes from that bench by the kitchen door, I hear fragments of his tales of suffering that make me sick and faint. Yet he is very reticent in regard to it, having evidently a feeling that he must protect others from knowing what he has known. As I make his acquaintance anew I realize that his great loss is truly exceeding gain; there is more of his real self in his wakened mind and soul than he lost in his arm.

But Peter, invalided home, returned not alone. It seemed to me, as he came up the walk, that he was over-heavily weighed

down by luggage, though he had a brother soldier to help him.

"If you please, 'm," said Peter diffidently, when our first greetings were over, "I've taken the liberty of bringing some one 'ome."

"Nothing could please me better," I said, holding out a welcoming hand to the tall soldier at his side.

"If you please, 'm," said Peter, grinning, — if heroes can be said to grin, — "she's inside."

He opened the big old-fashioned basket he was carrying, made of osier, a kind that I remember seeing in my grandmother's attic many years ago, and there — O Pharaoh's daughter, how I understand you now! — was a little child of perhaps ten months, asleep. She had soft dark hair, hands a bit too thin for a baby, eyes that proved to be, when she wakened and opened them, big and brown; and a mouth that had learned and not for-

gotten, like so many sorrowful mouths today, how to smile.

"Where did you find her?" Madge and I cried out in one breath.

"She was in the village where I was taken when I was wounded; you will hexcuse me, 'm, but I cannot say its name, I really cannot. A woman had taken charge of her for weeks; she had been found quite deserted by the roadside, I believe, 'm, earlier in the war, when people were trying to escape from the henemy. The nurse used to bring her into the 'ospital just to let the soldiers see her."

Peter was disappointed that I could not speak, but speak I could not.

"She's a French baby, 'm," he added. "I took a great fancy to her, and when I came away I told them — "

"What did you tell them, Peter?" I asked sternly. The little thing had grasped my finger and was trying to pull herself up. It was the first touch from

any of my fugitives that seemed to come from my very own, and I knew that the French baby had come into my life to stay.

"Knowing your 'abits, Miss, I told them I thought I knew a good 'ome for her, so they sent her on with a nurse who was coming back, reserved for me, as it were. They kindly allowed me to bring her down from London meself, but I 'ad difficulty in 'olding her, so I took out me clothes and put them in a paper, and she fitted very nicely in the basket."

Peter still mistook my silence for hesitation.

"I thought if you didn't care to adopt her, I would, 'm; but from what they told me about her clothing and all and from the look of her, I fancy she's rather your class than mine, 'm."

"I couldn't aspire to your class, Peter," I said; "you belong among the heroes. We will all adopt her, you and Madge

and I and Don and Puck and the Atom and our English queens. Among us all she will get a well-rounded training."

The stream is rippling past with its old music; the pony is grazing in the meadow; my June roses glow within my garden, yellow, white, and deep red; and still the vast sea of human sorrow breaks, breaks against my garden wall, and no one knows whither its tides may draw. Is it thus that the whole earth must gain the finer knowledge that comes alone through suffering and learn how false are the gods it has been following with swift feet?

I hardly dare confess my foolishness, but when I saw Peter that day of his return come down the village street with a tall khaki-clad figure beside him, I thought for one whole blissful, awful moment that he had found you, living, and had brought you home. Through many such moments I could not live; all the joy

and the anguish of time and of eternity were crowded into it. Yet even in that flash I knew that no mere human contact could ever bring you so close as you are now to me. Separated by walls of mere flesh and bone, there could no longer be this entire one-ness of soul with soul. You, belovèd, are forever too near to touch. What death may be I know not, but it is something far different from what we mortals think.

Then I saw that Peter's companion was only another British Tommy, who needed my hospitality; and I helped make ready his beef and beer with great gladness in my heart.

. . . Content for you. Men from old time have died for the faith they held, and men have died for dreams. I know no faith, no dream better worth dying for than this for which you gave your life, the dream of human freedom. It is our race pride that a passion for liberty was kin-

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The stream is rippling past with its old music; the pony is grazing in the meadow; my June roses glow within my garden, yellow, white, and deep red; and still the vast sea of human sorrow breaks, breaks against my garden wall, and no one knows whither its tides may draw. Is it thus that the whole earth must gain the finer knowledge that comes alone through suffering and learn how false are the gods it has been following with swift feet?

I hardly dare confess my foolishness, but when I saw Peter that day of his return come down the village street with a tall khaki-clad figure beside him, I thought for one whole blissful, awful moment that he had found you, living, and had brought you home. Through many such moments I could not live; all the joy

and the anguish of time and of eternity were crowded into it. Yet even in that flash I knew that no mere human contact could ever bring you so close as you are now to me. Separated by walls of mere flesh and bone, there could no longer be this entire one-ness of soul with soul. You, belovèd, are forever too near to touch. What death may be I know not, but it is something far different from what we mortals think.

Then I saw that Peter's companion was only another British Tommy, who needed my hospitality; and I helped make ready his beef and beer with great gladness in my heart.

. . . Content for you. Men from old time have died for the faith they held, and men have died for dreams. I know no faith, no dream better worth dying for than this for which you gave your life, the dream of human freedom. It is our race pride that a passion for liberty was kin-

dled early in our remotest forebears; there is no nobler task than keeping this divine spark alive upon the human hearth. In my moments of insight I know that life has no greater boon than a chance to die for one's faith, and you have died for this. I would not take from you, even if I could, your hour of glory, your great hour of death.

THE END